

● WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY, DONEGAL, ESSEX AND SOMERSET ● TAIWAN: ISLAND OF ENDEMICS ● BIRDING BY JIZZ PART 4

Birdwatch

The home of birding • www.birdwatch.co.uk

Issue 282 • December 2015 • £4.20

WONDERS OF NATURE

EXPLORE BRITAIN'S BEST WETLANDS

Find out how to see over two million waterbirds at just 17 sites this winter

IDENTIFICATION

POCHARD IMPOSTERS

The vagrant Americans that could be hidden in our duck flocks

ART AWARD

MASTERPIECES!

We reveal this year's winner and other outstanding works

FINDER'S ACCOUNT



ON THE LIST AT LAST?

Orkney's Chestnut Bunting could become a British first

KILLING FOR SCIENCE?

The controversial pros and cons of specimen 'collecting'



Christmas quacker

Have a festive dabble at finding your own Green-winged Teal

Hold steady

Technology on test: Canon's new image-stabilised optics

Point of view

In the field with Pentax's new 8x43 binocular

DISPLAY UNTIL 23 DECEMBER • £4.20



HR ED Fieldsopes

opticon

Designed and engineered without compromise, HR ED fieldscopes deliver exceptional optical performance combined with sublime handling and total reliability.

Available in straight through or 45° angled bodies with prices starting from £699.

30 year guarantee.

Bodies (Str or 45°):
HR 66 GA ED £699
HR 80 GA ED £849

Recommended Eyepieces:
SDLv2 18-54x/24-72x £289
HDF T 20xWW/27xWW £139
HDF T 28xWW/38xWW £159

Range of telephoto options available



Free Digiscoping Kit

Purchase an HR 66 GA ED or HR 80 GA ED complete with SDL eyepiece and receive a free 50306 VG-180 SDL DCC Kit (SRP £189). Kit includes Olympus VG-180 camera + camera mount, 8Gb SD card and Push-fit Photoadapter.

Available from participating stockists. Offer period 1.9.15-31.12.15

The Best Birdwatching Optics since 1970



DBA VHD

"Smaller, Lighter, Brighter, Sharper", the new DBA VHD takes our design philosophy to a new level. The all new VHD optical system offers brighter, sharper images compared to its predecessor in a similarly compact package. 100% made in Japan. 30 year guarantee.

Available in 8x42 and 10x42 with prices starting from just £579

Opticron equipment can be tried, tested and purchased at good optical retailers nationwide. For more information and to order a **Product Guide** please phone **01582 726522** or visit us online at **www.opticron.co.uk**

Opticron. Unit 21, Titan Court, Laporte Way, Luton, Beds, LU4 8EF UK Fax: 01582 723559 Email: sales@opticron.co.uk

opticon

Contents

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER BY MARC GUYT (WWW.AGAMI.NL)

GUEST EDITORIAL Martin Garner



THIS is a privileged opportunity, but one which concentrates the mind. After 40 years of birding, what to say in one focused comment? What would you say? Here's my key thought: make others great.

My wife Sharon and I are 'free spirits', so we have seen quite a few different communities over the years. Birders everywhere normally function as part of a 'society' of some sort; sometimes proximity itself brings associations and friendships, while other places are organised into local birding groups. Social media and the online world have spawned all kinds of new connections. So how do you maximise these communities? By seeking to make others great.

The default position for most of us – or is it just me? – seems to be to figure out how to look good and save face where necessary. But there is another way. We deliberately included a 'team element' in the Challenge Series books (on which by the way *Birdwatch* has

done a selfless job of making us look great). It might not be much, but it's an effort to say: "There's no way I do this alone – I get to suck the info out of all kinds of amazing people."

Here in Yorkshire, a thrilling aspect of the recently established Spurn Migration Festival has been to see the development of a culture of 'bigging up' others – watching others flourish. Flamborough now also has an atmosphere of lots of encouragement. There is another indirect result of trying to make others great: you flourish, too.

Bigging up others can go against the grain; it might even hurt a little. It's somewhat counter-intuitive to see the huge potential in others and call attention to it. Yet others have done that for me.

And the result of drawing out that enormous promise in other people? More – and better – conservation work would get done, new artwork would be spawned, great books would get written. Birding would be all round a lot more fun, if only we each tried to make others great.

FEATURES

34 Winter wonderlands

Wintering wildfowl and waders put on some dramatic displays as they gather in huge flocks. David Callahan recommends the best sites to take in such spectacles.

39 ID photo guide: Common Pochard, Canvasback and Redhead

Lack of familiarity with North American species Canvasback and Redhead could lead to confusion with the ubiquitous Common Pochard. Keith Vinicombe has all the tips on how to separate them.

46 Debate: should we still 'collect' specimens for science?

The killing of a Guadalcanal Moustached Kingfisher in October sparked online outrage. Two scientists present their views.

50 Birdwatch Artist of the Year 2015

Find out who won this year's prestigious art award. Also presented is a selection of works from the SWLA annual exhibition.

55 Special focus: Taiwan

Isolated and with a varied landscape, Taiwan is a hot-spot for endemism, making it an excellent birding destination.



EDITORIAL OFFICE

Warners Group Publications plc
The Chocolate Factory

5 Clarendon Road

London N22 6XJ

Tel: 020 8881 0550

Fax: 020 8881 0990

Email: editorial@birdwatch.co.uk

Web: www.birdwatch.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/
birdwatchmagazine

Twitter: @BirdwatchExtra

Managing Editor: Dominic Mitchell
Assistant Editor: Rebecca Armstrong
Staff Writer: David Callahan
Head of Design: Lynn Wright
Optics Editor: Mike Alibone
Photographic Consultant: Steve Young
Identification Consultants:
Andy Stoddart and Keith Vinicombe

Publisher: Rob McDonnell

Advertisement Sales Manager:

Ian Lycett (020 8881 0550)

Advertisement Design:

Cathy Herron (01778 391167)

Marketing Manager:

Sarah Stephens (01778 395007)

Office Manager: Heather O'Connor

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ORDERS

For all subscription and order enquiries
please contact Warners Group

Publications: 01778 392027 or email
birdwatchsubs@warnersgroup.co.uk



NEWSTRADE DISTRIBUTION

Birdwatch is on sale in many branches of W H Smith and other good newsagents, and should be available to order. If you have a problem obtaining a copy in your area, please call Warners Group Publications on 01778 391150.

ADVERTISEMENT SALES

We also manage advertisement sales for BirdLife International's magazine *World Birdwatch* and for the official programmes of the British Birdwatching Fair and the Scottish Birdfair. For more details please call 020 8881 0550.

© Warners Group Publications 2015.
ISSN 0967-1870

No part of this magazine may be reproduced, copied or stored in a retrieval system without the prior permission in writing of the publisher. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Warners Group Publications or its staff. No liability can be accepted for any loss or damage to material submitted, however caused.



This publication is
printed by Warners
01778 395111

ADVISORY PANEL

Tim Appleton MBE, Mike Fraser,
Chris Harbard, Erik Hirschfeld,
Stephen Moss, Killian Mullarney,
Bill Oddie OBE, Hadoram Shirihai,
Keith Vinicombe, Martin Woodcock,
Steve Young.

Associate Sponsor



The moment when you are closer to nature than ever before.
This is the moment we work for.

Winter
Special
Offers!

// FASCINATION
MADE BY ZEISS



ZEISS VICTORY Winter Special Offers

Receive a FREE harness worth £55 when you buy a pair of ZEISS VICTORY binoculars (excluding compacts).*

Special offers also available for the ZEISS CONQUEST and TERRA binoculars.

For a full list of offers available, details on how to claim your free gift and for full terms and conditions, please visit www.zeiss.co.uk/naturewinterdeals

*All offers valid on purchases made 1st November 2015 - 31st January 2016. Promotional goods subject to availability. Carl Zeiss Ltd reserve the right to cancel or amend this promotional offer before the end of the promotional period. No claims will be accepted after 27th February 2016.





WILSON'S WARBLER BY GRAHAM JEPSON

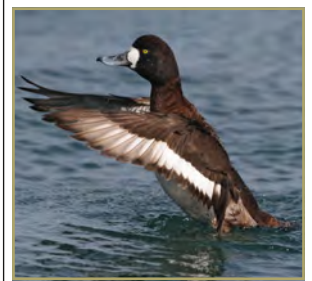
EXPERT REVIEWS

58 Mike Alibone is impressed by the performance of Canon's image-stabilised binoculars. Plus: the long-awaited *Robins and Chats* reviewed.



EXPERT ADVICE

67 Make the most of your time in the field this month by taking part in a BTO survey. Our series on jizz continues with waders, and learn about diving and dabbling ducks.



GREATER SCAUP BY STEFAN PRÜTZKE (WWW.GREEN-LENS.DE)

25 Enjoy a swan spectacular at Caerlaverock this December. We also have great days out in Essex, Somerset and Co Donegal. The target bird is that scarce visitor from North America, Green-winged Teal.



SWAN FEED BY BRIAN MORRELL

REGULARS

6 The big picture

Winter is a difficult time for birds, so spare a thought for a Rufous Hummingbird caught in the New Jersey snow.

8 The big stories

Read the full stories behind the discovery of Britain's first Chestnut Bunting and second Wilson's Warbler.

14 Analysis: rarities

Vagrants came from east and west in the autumn's busiest month for migration.

18 Analysis: scarcities

The east coast was the place to be, with excellent numbers of exciting migrants arriving en masse.

22 Western Palearctic

It was all about the Americans this month, with the Azores especially alive with Yank passerines.

49 The political birder: Mark Avery

Does the National Trust do nature any good? Our columnist asks Britain's biggest landowner some searching questions.

77 Your letters and photos

Conservation-conscious kids are highlighting the plight of Hen Harrier.

78 News of the wild: Bill Oddie

It's often said that being out in nature is a cure for depression, stress and anxiety, but Bill argues this isn't always the case.

READER SERVICES

63 Birdwatch Bookshop

Get the best birding books at great prices, including our Book of the Month, *Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America*.

73 Subscriptions

Subscribe to *Birdwatch* today and get six free issues.



DEAD PARTRIDGE BY BEN WOODHAMS



Subscribe to *Birdwatch* this month and get **SIX FREE** issues!

See page 73 for more details or call 01778 392027

Snowbound hummingbird

Winter is a season to test the mettle of all birds, when their ability to keep warm and well fed is stretched to its limit, and a 'cold snap' can kill off large parts of a species' population even in relatively temperate countries such as Britain – as happened to Dartford Warbler, European Stonechat and Kingfisher after the two consecutive freezes in the winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Imagine, then, what it takes for a high-maintenance bird like a hummingbird to survive in the snow and ice. Four species of these fast-hovering nectar specialists overwinter in eastern North America, mostly around the Gulf of Mexico, with Rufous Hummingbird (pictured) eking out a frugal living as far north as North Carolina after migrating from its north-western summer range between Oregon and Alaska. Individuals sometimes wander further – to Cape May Point, New Jersey, in winter 2013-14 in this case – where they can be caught out by harsh weather.

It is not known whether this first-winter bird survived the New Jersey snow, but the odds would have been stacked against it without fully stocked hummingbird feeders being available. But it serves as a reminder that our own birds will also be suffering in such conditions this month – and also that exotic rare species can still turn up occasionally in winter! ■



MICHAEL O'BRIEN



FINDER'S REPORT

Sweet Chestnut



Julian Branscombe's vagrant 'Yellowhammer' set off alarm bells when a photo hit the internet, but it looked like a potential first for Britain had disappeared for good ...



The Chestnut Bunting's initial misidentification is perhaps understandable from this image, but the Asian species has a streaked chestnut rump and no white on its tail-sides.



Chestnut Bunting: Papa Westray, Orkney, 19-29 October 2015

THE bunting flew up, calling with a thin, quiet *tsit tsit*. My immediate reaction was that it was rare. It landed in the near-leafless sycamore for a minute, but I just couldn't get onto it. My friend Michael Schott, visiting me on Papa Westray in the far north-west of Orkney, did have it in view, though. He commented on how yellow its underparts were. I moved towards him and saw the bird's subtly marked face and reddish-brown rump, but almost immediately it flicked over the wall and out of the garden.

This was 19 October, almost a year to the day after I'd seen my previous Yellowhammer on 'Papay', as it is known to locals. Very soon, we'd convinced ourselves that this must be another one – I couldn't see what else it could have been. It reappeared briefly that afternoon, letting me take a photo of its back and head, but again it didn't hang around. I reported it on the local 'Orkbird2' forum as a Yellowhammer that night, making a fateful comment on the chestnut tone that it



Despite its rarity, the Chestnut Bunting was ridiculously approachable, often continuing to forage oblivious to the presence of birders – in this case, the 'Papay' Ranger Jonathan Ford.

seemed to show in its crown.

The next morning, it showed (or at least bits of it showed) for two minutes, grovelling around in the docks under the sycamores. I paid some attention to it and took another couple of photos, but Michael and I were still assuming it was a Yellowhammer and very soon it had vanished again. A couple of hours later Paul Higson rang me – he'd seen the photo I'd taken and he felt sure we had the ID wrong. "Get back and see it!" was his command. We made a couple of concerted searches that afternoon but we had no luck.

By that evening, 'Papay bunting' talk was taking off on the internet. Having not been able to relocate it and feeling that we'd been slow on the uptake, I was feeling increasingly distraught. Chestnut Bunting was one of the suggestions, but I distinctly recalled a glimpse of prominent black streaks on the richly coloured uppertail coverts, which didn't seem to fit. I wondered if a Pine Bunting x Yellowhammer hybrid could look like that.

The next day I saw the picture of the October 2014 Chestnut Bunting on Ouessant, Brittany,

Though crowds were generally small at any one time owing to the relative inaccessibility of the bird's island location, several charter flights made it to Papa Westray, and many birders successfully added the species to their British list, should the bird – as seems conceivable – make it through the Rarities and Records Committees.



MARK RAYMENT

Left: despite the bird's initial disappearance after first being located, once refound it stuck to pretty much the same muddy path, only finally leaving overnight on Thursday 29th, once the weather cleared up.



France, with its streaked surround to its rump, and the penny dropped. It had seemed tiny in flight – why had I ever thought Yellowhammer? Everything we'd noted, along with the photos, seemed to match. However, we'd done a poor job of evidencing this.

Frustration grew. For three and a half days we looked in the original spot several times a day, along with scouring every farmyard, bird cover crop, 'tattie' patch and rough corner in that half of the island. By 24 October we'd given up. That afternoon, Michael and I were walking down the track to the Knap of Howar (at more than 5,000 years old, the

oldest standing – if rather ruined – house in Europe) when Michael suddenly saw a streaky small bird hop across the track in front of us. It was there: a Chestnut Bunting – 'our' Chestnut Bunting – just 15 m in front of us, grovelling at the track side.

It was very obliging for the next 10 minutes. Lots more photos and good field notes were taken this time. Several features were noted, from the unobtrusively distinctive pattern of head markings to the completely unmarked tail, then a call to Paul was placed to get the news out to the birding world (in my excitement, I think I gabbled down the phone: "We've not just nailed it, we've crucified it.").

After texts and calls to everyone interested in birds on

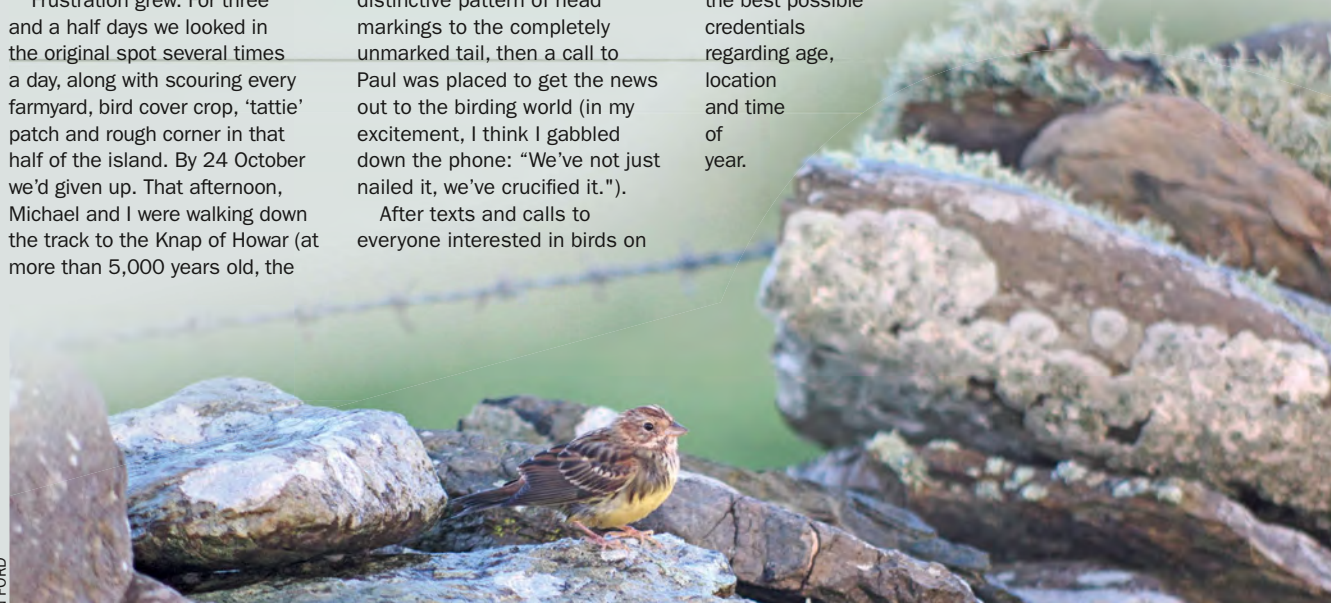
this island of 80 folk, Patrick Taylor and Jonathan Ford soon arrived – the bird carried on showing and even jumped up onto a wall to show off its fantastic lemon-yellow lower breast and belly, framed by a neat gorget of streaks across its throat and upper breast, and well-streaked flanks.

Two hours later, my friend Barrie Hamill made it on the last Loganair flight of the day (snapping up the one available seat) and the bird showed beautifully in the failing light. This individual had everything going for it for it to have a decent chance of being considered the first genuine vagrant of this Far Eastern species for Britain – good looks, confiding character, plus the best possible credentials regarding age, location and time of year.

Barrie's arrival was a taste of things to come. Next morning the first of many charter flights buzzed in. Everyone was very pleased with their views. The plumage condition and characters – especially the strength of underpart streaking and the contrasting bright belly, plus chestnut tones in the lateral crown-stripe and hind ear coverts – seem to suggest that this is a first-winter male.

The whole experience has been wonderful, in the end. It has left me with no end of lessons to take in. Look twice at everything. Take better photos. Note how appearances change from different angles and in different light. Don't panic. And remember that while rare birds are rare, they are still found. It could be you! ■

• While this could prove to be the first acceptable record of Chestnut Bunting for Britain, the species has been recorded a few other times but categorised as of uncertain origin – perhaps it is now time to reassess some previous occurrences? There are also nine accepted Western Palearctic records from Finland, France, Hungary, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia, all from between late September and early November.



JONATHAN FORD

Typically a species of woodland and scrub on its home range in east Asia, the first-winter Chestnut Bunting looks somewhat out of place on the lichen-encrusted rocks of Papa Westray. After this bird with seemingly good credentials, perhaps one or two of the previous observations may be reassessed.



EXTEND YOUR HORIZONS WITH VIKING OPTICAL

ED FF

8x42 • 10x42

BRINGING A NEW LEVEL OF VIEWING EXPERIENCE THE ED-FF PROVIDES STUNNING EDGE TO EDGE CLARITY THANKS TO THE FIELD FLATTENING LENSES

The ED-FF is a high quality binocular with advanced features giving a high quality image in a robust and fully waterproof form.

£399

Suggested usage:



50mm ED PRO

50mm • 12-36x Zoom Eyepiece

PREMIUM COMPACT SCOPE WITH HIGH QUALITY ED GLASS

The new premium 50mm ED Pro scope uses high performance ED (Extra-Low Dispersion) glass and advanced lens coatings to provide superior light transmission and clear, high-definition images.

£399

Suggested usage:



To find your nearest Viking stockist please call us on **01986 875315** or alternatively visit us online. For more information on our products and conservation work please visit www.vikingoptical.co.uk

Viking Optical Ltd, Blyth Road, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8EN UK
Fax: 01986 874788 Email: sales@vikingoptical.co.uk



FINDER'S REPORT

How to strike gold in the garden



Tony Marr and Roy Dennis didn't have to wander far to find a bright yellow American sprite – but would this second for Britain hang around?



It's hard to imagine a more perfect portrait of this much-desired American wood-warbler, a pinnacle of passerine beauty in every way.

GRAHAM JEPSON

Wilson's Warbler: Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 13-17 October 2015

MY old friend Roy Dennis, with whom I used to go birdwatching – as it was then called – in Sussex and Hampshire during the 1950s and 1960s, was making a short visit to stay with me for just a couple of days' birding.

He now lives near Inverness, Highland, and, while my main home is in Cley, Norfolk, I have been spending every spring and autumn for the last seven years at the Butt of Lewis, recording bird migration between Britain and the Arctic. After lunch on Tuesday 13th, we went into the large garden behind my house, whose owners generously allow me permanent access, and 10 minutes later we found ourselves staring at a tiny bright yellow warbler in a Sitka Spruce.

I saw it at 2.20 pm, when I said to Roy: "There's a Goldcrest flying towards us." It landed in the top of a small Sitka Spruce only 10 m from us. With binoculars we could see that the bird was dazzlingly bright yellow below and olive-green above, with no obvious wing or tail markings. It was small and had a tiny black bill. I thought it had a black cap, but could not

be sure as we were looking into the light. We both called it at the same moment: "It's a Wilson's Warbler!" – a second for Britain. We knew instantly what it was, as we'd dreamed of seeing one of these colourful American wood-warblers in Britain since we were schoolboys. It dropped down into the bushes out of sight. At 2.45 pm Roy saw it again in the top of another small

Sitka Spruce, but once more it flew and dived back into cover.

At 3 pm, I put the exciting news out. We held our breaths. Our reputations were on the line, especially without the photographic evidence so crucial these days for any claim of a rarity of such magnitude. Imagine twitchers travelling overnight from, say, south-east England, some 700-800 miles, to this

distant island and discovering on arrival that the bird wasn't a rare one after all. We would plummet from heroes to zeroes in just a few seconds.

My mobile immediately started to ring, and continued to do so frequently over the next four days. Most calls were enquiries, but many were congratulatory. We spent three more hours searching in vain for the bird, hoping to obtain photographs. The first other observers, who were on Harris to the south, arrived around 6 pm, searched for the bird and refound it at 6.35 pm; one of them saw the black cap, which removed any possible doubt about the identification. We were walking on air and punching it at the same time.

This is the first record for Scotland, and only the second British record after the first one at Rame Head, Cornwall, on 13 October 1985, 30 years ago on the exact same date! It's also the third for Britain and Ireland after one seen on Dursley Island, Co Cork, in October 2013 (see *Birdwatch* 257: 59). This is a real mega and a lifetime dream come true for both of us.



TONY DIXON

Though initially secretive, the Wilson's Warbler began showing well to visiting birders, and stuck around in its favoured garden for a total of five days.

Over the next four days, around 250 people travelled to Lewis to see the bird, and although it was often mobile and elusive, most people's patience was rewarded with great views and photographs. Dr David Nichols, the owner of the garden, other neighbours and I gave arriving birders a warm Lewis welcome at the end of their long overnight journeys, with clear directions and much-appreciated refreshments. The customary collection produced £500, which is being donated to a local medical charity.

The bird was utterly charismatic, cute and irresistible. Its tiny size, vivid colours, neat little black skull cap and unbelievably fast movements produced more 'wows' and cheers than I have ever heard before at a twitch. Observers said variously that it was "the best bird I've ever seen", "far better than even a male Sibe Rubythroat" and "my first sighting – in full view, in sunshine in the small apple tree less than three metres from me – left me with shaking hands and close to tears. It subsequently took me nearly five minutes to text a two-word message – 'GOT IT!'"

This twitch turned out to be a situation where everybody won. The location was easy to find and access, the twitchers added the bird to their lists, the photographers eventually secured some wonderful photos, and the island's ferry company, airlines, car hire firms, hotels, B&Bs, guesthouses, shops, restaurants and bars did brisk business. Two groups chartered a light aircraft to fly them from the Midlands into Stornoway Airport – a snip at £450 each, but still less expensive than Flybe! The locals were impressed by the enthusiasm, energy and excitement of the visitors. Even the weather rose to the occasion: dry and warm throughout, with the Saturday being in the opinion of many residents the finest, clearest and calmest day of the whole year. Unfortunately the Wilson's Warbler agreed, and left that night. ■

STATS & FACTS

First recorded: Rame Head, Cornwall, 13 October 1985.

Last recorded: Dursey Island, Co Cork, 18-21 September 2013.

Previous British records: 1.

Previous Irish records: 1.

Mega rating: ★★★★★

FINDER'S REPORT

New World Numenius



Birding 'off-piste' away from the Scilly crowds led to a singular discovery for **Steve Broyd** as a whimbrel flew off revealing its tell-tale brown rump.

Hudsonian Whimbrel: Tresco, Scilly, 15-19 October 2015



Hudsonian Whimbrel is a more well-marked species than its Eurasian counterpart, and any whimbrel with such 'clean' features seen on this side of the Atlantic should now ring alarm bells among sharper field birders.

THE great thing about staying on Tresco, Scilly, is the increased chance of finding your own birds, because only a handful of birders stay on the island. I realised this after many years of trailing round a crowded neighbouring St Mary's, and since 1988 have spent at least a week each October aiming to do this. I have found a few bits and pieces during these visits, but it is never what you expect, nor when or where you think it might be. The going can seem very slow at times but it pays to stick with it.

This was the case on 15 October when, after a long hard day walking around the island, I decided to take a late look at the beach at Gimble Porth. I was actually hoping to find a passerine feeding on the wrack, but the tide was in, leaving only a small bit of beach exposed. There was little to see. I was about to turn my attention to the adjacent fields, when a medium-sized wader came flying across the bay towards me. It was a whimbrel (always look at these on Scilly!) and it was heading towards the tide-line just in front of me. Unfortunately, it saw me, turned

tail and headed back out across the bay. My jaw dropped – there was no white on the upperparts – it had a brown back, rump and tail. What's more, the underwing was dark and the upperwing showed a strongly contrasting pattern of dark primaries and pale secondaries/coverts – it had to be Hudsonian Whimbrel.

I was on my own, didn't have my camera and the bird looked to be disappearing around the next headland – typical! Thankfully, it turned, headed straight back to the beach and landed. I could now see several other features, including the striking brown-and-white head pattern, seemingly longer bill with an extensive pink base to the lower mandible and, when it raised its wings, the barred brown and cream axillaries. What more did I need?

The answer was photos, and for others to see it. I rang Bob Hibbett, who was staying with me, told him to hurry over and to bring my camera. Then I tweeted the news out. Bob arrived fairly quickly, followed by three other Tresco birders. I took some pretty ropey shots – sufficient to confirm my identification but not as good as those taken when those with professional kit arrived the next day.

Next morning, I was up early to confirm the bird was still present and waited for the boats from other islands to arrive. Despite the well-watched Pagham, West Sussex, bird earlier in the year, this individual proved surprisingly popular, staying faithful to its favourite stretch of beach until around 9 am on 19 October. During its stay it provided some superb photo opportunities and allowed observers to closely study its finer plumage detail. Remarkably, what was very likely the same bird appeared on Marazion Beach, Cornwall, on 30 October – whether it remained undetected on the islands or went straight to the mainland is anyone's guess. ■

STATS & FACTS

First recorded: Out Skerries, Shetland, 24 July-8 August 1974.

Last recorded: Church Norton, West Sussex, 9 June-27 July 2015.

Previous British records: 10.

Previous Irish records: 2.

Mega rating: ★★★★★

SIMON KNIGHT

BOLETAS Birdwatching Centre

Birders dream Guest House
in the Aragonese Pyrenees **since 1994**
Lammergeir & Wallcreeper sanctuary



Excellent food & wine

50€ F/B



Info: 01162 889318 WWW.BOLETAS.ORG

SCOPAC



THE ORIGINAL TRIPOD CARRIER

Scopac Lite £55
Scopac plus £59
P&P Free UK

By cheque payable to 'Scopac'
or buy online

21 Bernard Road
Cromer
Norfolk
NR27 9AW



See website for details: www.scopac.co.uk
contact us: +44 (0)7810 560916 enquiries@scopac.co.uk



AVIAN ADVENTURES

WORLD-WIDE BIRDWATCHING & WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

THE NATURAL LEADERS

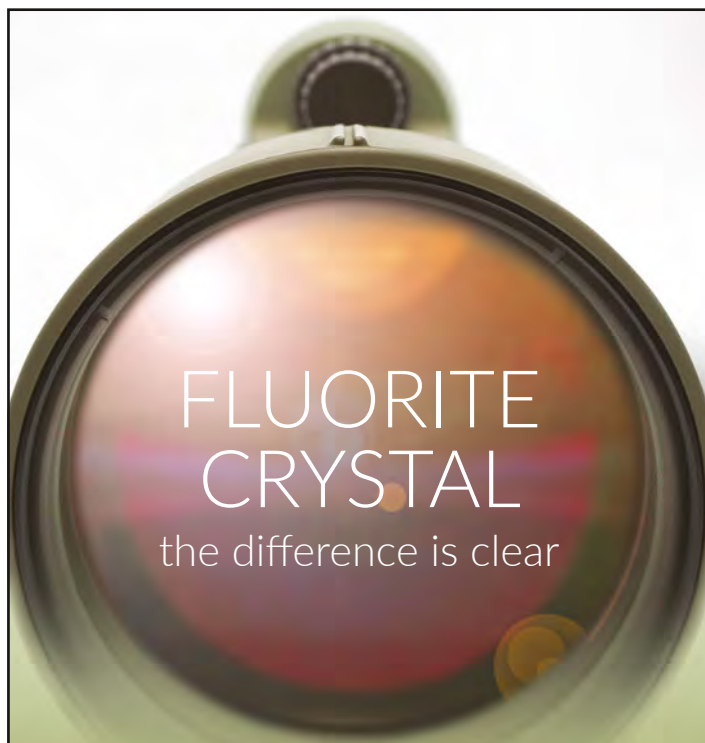
New for 2016

Peru • New York • Chile & Falklands

Finland • Lesvos • Canary Islands
Spain (Extremadura) • Spain (Pyrenees & Steppes)
Spain (Birds & Bears) • Australia • Falklands
Botswana • South Africa • Tanzania
Morocco • Alaska • Arizona • Texas
Argentina • Guatemala • Brazil
Honduras • St. Lucia



www.avianadventures.co.uk
01384 372013 avianadventures@btinternet.com



FLUORITE CRYSTAL

the difference is clear

Kowa is the only spotting scope manufacturer to use the pure mineral **fluorite crystal** in the manufacture of their optical lenses. What does this mean for you?

Simply put - fluorite crystal delivers **the best** viewing experience available today, virtually eliminating all chromatic aberration (colour fringing). Combined with Kowa's legendary optical heritage and leading technology, our spotting scopes reveal a simply **brehtaking** and unrivalled view of the natural world.

Take a look through our flagship 880 series spotting scope and you will **see the difference** for yourself.



88MM PURE FLUORITE CRYSTAL OBJECTIVE LENS SPOTTING SCOPES.
AVAILABLE IN A STRAIGHT OR ANGLED MAGNESIUM ALLOY BODY.

KOWA PROMINAR 880 SERIES



see what you think...

Kowa Optimed Deutschland GmbH
Bendemannstrasse 9, 40210 Dusseldorf.
Germany | Tel: +49 (211) 542184-00
scope@kowaoptimed.com



www.kowaproducts.com

Rarities: October 2015

Rare songbirds rule the roost



This month featured a potential first for Britain as well as a glamorous Yank warbler. **Josh Jones** has the details.

Rustic Bunting's decline in its Fennoscandian breeding range has been reflected in a decrease in British records, which has seen individuals such as this at Gibraltar Point, Lincs, on 11th return to being assessed by the Rarities Committee.

Before September's Acadian Flycatcher it had been the best part of four years since the last British 'first' (the unassigned Portland leaf warbler aside). It was therefore pleasing to see what is potentially a second new British species turn up within the space of a month: a Chestnut Bunting on Papa Westray, Orkney (see pages 8-9).

Present from 19th, the bird was not conclusively identified until four days later, and it was only from 24th – when the bird was relocated – that it finally became twitchable. Fortunately it decided to put in an

extended stay until 29th, allowing many birders the opportunity to see not only a new British species but gain an 'island tick' too, as few had set foot on what the locals call 'Papay' previously.

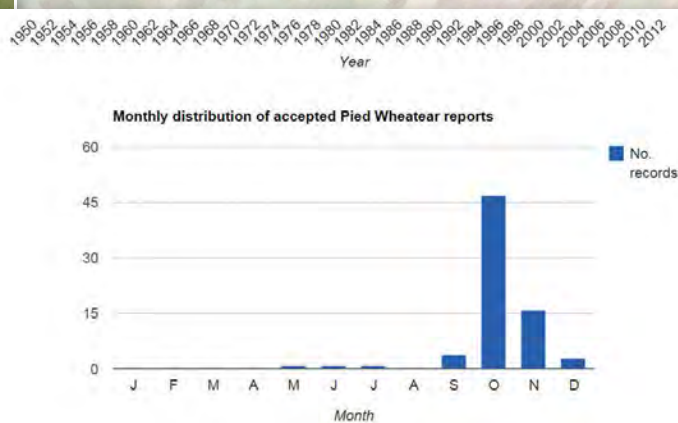
Chestnut Bunting has a chequered history in the Western Palearctic. Though there are clearly a number of recent records from other countries that fit what is known of the typical pattern of vagrancy for Far Eastern passerine migrants, all of Britain's previous records have been assigned to Category E – in most cases, probably rightly so, but the best

candidates for wild birds were probably the adult females seen on Out Skerries from 2-5 September 1994 and Fair Isle on 6-7 September 2002. There can be no denying that the appearance of a first-winter on British shores in mid-October is likely to be a game-changer, and one might anticipate that this could ensure the species is upgraded from Category E to A.

It's hard to look any further than the male Wilson's Warbler present at Port Nis, Lewis, from 13-17th (see pages 10-11) as the alternative 'bird of the month'. Though not a British first, it was

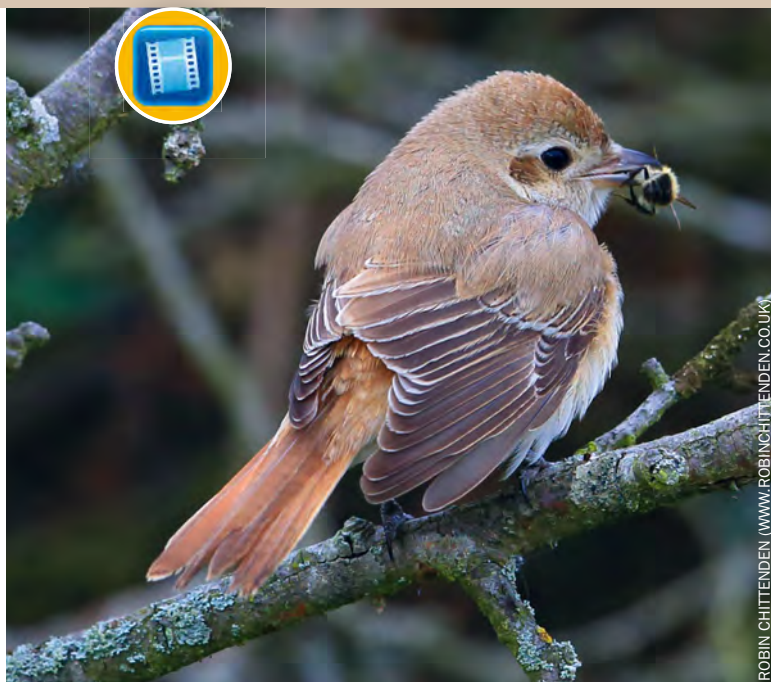
almost as good as, given that the only previous record was a bird at Rame Head, Cornwall, for one afternoon precisely 30 years previously. Initially quite elusive, the Lewis bird became gradually more confiding during its stay, eventually showing far better than the 2013 bird in Co Cork (which was twitchable for just one foggy day).

Britain's 10th Siberian Thrush might have given it a run for its money had it lingered at all. Unfortunately the bird had other ideas, and was only seen briefly on a few occasions following its initial discovery in poor weather on Fair



Left: this brief smart male Pied Wheatear at Botallack, Cornwall, on 17 October was unfortunately only seen by its photographer, as it was only confirmed as this eastern species a couple of days afterwards, by which time it had departed.

Above: from the BirdGuides histogram, it can be seen that October is the best month to see Pied Wheatear in Britain, and the three recorded this autumn – in Cornwall and Suffolk and on Shetland – all fall within this bracket. There's no need to give up hope in December, though!



ROBIN CHITTENDEN (WWW.ROBINCHITTENDEN.CO.UK)

Norfolk was the proud home of three Isabelline Shrikes during the month, including this long-staying popular and active first-winter, which held territory at Beeston Common, Sheringham, from 11-19th.



IAN GRANT

The only Isabelline Wheatear this month was this bird which was present during the evening between the airfield and Old Town, St Mary's, Scilly, on 8th; disappointingly, it disappeared overnight.

Isle, Shetland, mid-morning on 5th.

The diminishing of Siberian Rubythroat as a near-mythical rarity has been rapid over the past decade, though its appearance on our shores is still rightly celebrated. Where else but Fair Isle could claim the latest record of a female during the afternoon of 20th? The bird was the third for the island in four years, and it seems that this is the time of year to be on the famed Shetland hot-spot if you want to see this species: excluding the first for Britain found on 9 October 1975, previous records have come on 17th (2003), 21st (2013) and 23rd October (2005 and 2012).

The previous day had seen the same rocky outpost score a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, along with a supporting cast of Red-flanked Bluetails on 7th and 11th, Paddyfield Warbler on 8th and Lanceolated Warbler on 12th. Another 'Lancey' was seen on Out Skerries on 5th.

Brown Shrike is another mega-rarity that is occurring ever more regularly, and a first-winter at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 20th was the first to be recorded in 2015. This represents the third for the county, following records from 2009 and 2010.

The wildfowl highlight was

arguably the Black Scoter returning to Rossbeigh, Co Kerry, from 10th for its second winter. A first-winter drake Bufflehead at Priory CP Beds, on 29th bore a metal ring, though the possibility of this being North American in origin hasn't been entirely ruled out. Unfortunately the adult drake bearing a yellow plastic flag at Ullswater, Cumbria, from 24th was rather more suspect.

Cacklings and Canadas

Two Richardson's Cackling Geese returned to Islay, Argyll, with a Todd's Canada Goose also being present there; unfortunately the Ridgway's Cackling Goose in Devon may have damaged its initially promising credentials by switching its allegiance from the Dark-bellied Brent Goose flock on the estuary to Mallards on a local pond near Countess Weir.

Though regular enough not to warrant a mass twitch, the occurrence of a Little Crake in Britain always attracts attention, and the juvenile found at Slimbridge WWT, Glos, on 8th did just that. This was the third county record, and both previous Gloucestershire birds have also come from the reserve, the most recent being in September-October 2005. Unlike that bird, which stayed for almost three weeks, this latest individual wasn't seen again after it wandered off up a ditch just a few hours after its discovery.

A Squacco Heron was seen at a couple of sites in west Cornwall

from 24-26th but was reported belatedly.

Pallid Harriers are now expected fare in September and October, and this month produced at least eight birds, including the first for Co Mayo, at Annagh Marsh from 19th onwards. The final Shetland record came from Loch of Spiggie on 14th, while the West Sussex bird was last seen at Burpham on 10th. Presumably a single individual was responsible for fly-overs on the Isle of May, Fife, on 10th and 12th. Another was at Tarbat Ness, Highland, on 4th, with records from Spurn, East Yorks, on 25th and later at Donna Nook then Gibraltar Point, Lincs, presumably all concerning the same southbound juvenile. The male Northern Harrier continued to be present on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, throughout October and may well go on to winter on the island. The only Gyr Falcon seen was a white morph circling over Poulherry Bay, Co Clare, on 3rd.

The long-staying Greater Yellowlegs lingered near Whippingham, Isle of Wight, all month, though just three Lesser Yellowlegs were seen, in Co Cork, Argyll and Norfolk. A brief juvenile Spotted Sandpiper on Tresco, Scilly, on 21st was followed by another at Chard Junction, Dorset, on 24-25th, while a Marsh Sandpiper at Nanjizal, Cornwall, was a surprise on 9th. Last month's Wilson's Phalarope was last seen at Vange Marsh, Essex,



RICHARD STONIER

A good autumn for Blyth's Pipits included this showy first-winter on St Mary's, Scilly, from 10-25th. It could be reliably found around the Peninnis Head area for most of its stay.

on 3rd, while the Long-billed Dowitcher remained at Pennington Marshes, Hants, throughout.

An unusual October record concerned a lingering adult Gull-billed Tern at Blennerville, Co Kerry, from 17th. The Forster's Tern returned to Galway Bay on 24th for its 13th consecutive winter, while Bonaparte's Gulls remained in Devon and Moray and Nairn, and a third-winter American Herring Gull was seen sporadically in the St Just area of Cornwall from 17th (presumed to be last winter's bird returning).

No fewer than four Blyth's Pipits were reported: Norfolk's third record was well photographed at Stiffkey on 2-3rd, while others were reported from Sumburgh, Shetland, on 15th and Nanjizal on 31st. The best of the bunch was the long-staying and confiding bird on St Mary's, Scilly, from 10-25th which was enjoyed by all-comers to the archipelago.

At least 10 Red-throated Pipits were reported, though the only twitchable bird was that at Northwick Warth, Glos, on 3-4th. Pechora Pipits were found on Foula, Shetland, on 10th and North Ronaldsay on 13th, while the long-stayer was still around Melby, Shetland, to 13th.

Pied Wheatears included males at Spurn on 3rd and in Cornwall on 17th, and a female on Unst, Shetland, on 14th. An Isabelline Wheatear – the fifth for Scilly –



GAVIN THOMAS

was on St Mary's airfield at dusk on 8th. Half a dozen Siberian Stonechats included a stunning male at Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk, from 21-25th.

Bluetail bonanza

Norfolk also claimed four of the impressive 17 Red-flanked Bluetails seen nationwide this month, including two in close vicinity at Holkham Pines and Wells Woods respectively. These two appeared as part of an amazing purple patch in the county mid-month, which also saw three Isabelline Shrikes and two Hume's Warblers recorded among countless scarcities and a huge

fall of common migrants. Of the other bluetails, the most notable record concerned a bird at Mizen Head, Co Cork, on 20th.

Other Hume's Warblers were in Kent on 18th, at Flamborough Head on 27-28th and at Durlston CP, Dorset, on 31st. Six Arctic Warblers included two Irish records: the second for Co Galway on Inishmore on 11th and the first for Co Mayo at Erris Head from 22-28th. A late Aquatic Warbler was on the Lizard, Cornwall, on 3rd. A further Isabelline Shrike was at South Huish Marsh, Devon, from 14-19th.

A male Two-barred Crossbill briefly at Blacksod, Co Mayo, on 15th was another county first. Half a dozen Rustic Buntings included a showy bird at Gibraltar Point on 11th, and another was on Cape Clear, Co Cork, on 5th.

Unlike on the Azores (see pages

Left: four Swainson's Thrushes have been found this year, including three in October which included this bird at Baltasound on Mainland, Shetland, on 4th.

Below: October was a bumper month in which 17 Red-flanked Bluetails were recorded; all were found on the east and south coasts, from Shetland down to this bird on St Agnes, Scilly, on 11th.

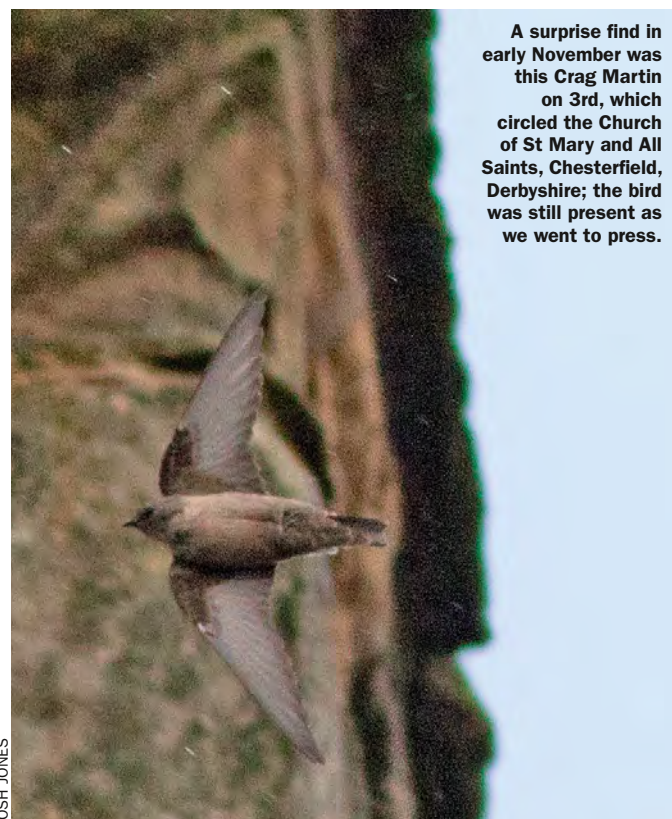


22-23), it wasn't a vintage month for Nearctic passerines in Britain, although a Swainson's Thrush – the fourth of the year – showed well at Baltasound, Unst, on 4th and the Red-eyed Vireo remained on St Agnes, Scilly, to 2nd. ■

RICHARD STONIER

• For full details of all October's sightings, go to www.birdguides.com. To receive free illustrated weekly sightings summaries and other news, sign up at bit.ly/BGWeeklyNews.

BIRDBUIDES



JOSH JONES

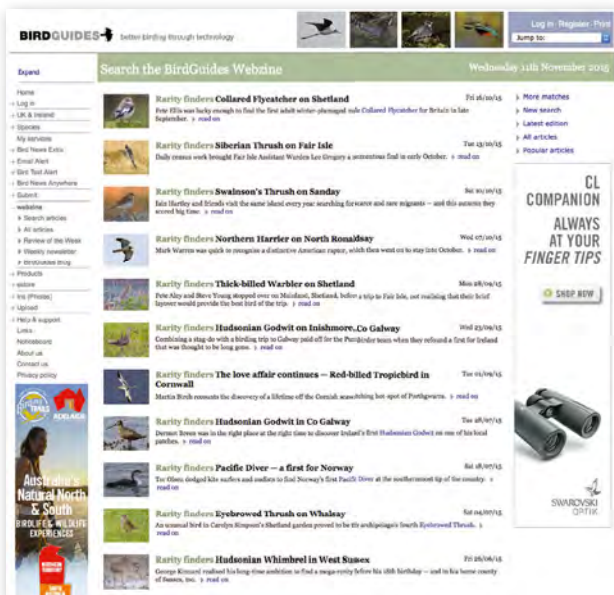
A surprise find in early November was this Crag Martin on 3rd, which circled the Church of St Mary and All Saints, Chesterfield, Derbyshire; the bird was still present as we went to press.



This juvenile Little Crane, seen on the Rushy Pen at Slimbridge WWT, Glos, was a one-day wonder on 8th, though popular among the many birders who managed to make it in time. There have been just two records since 2011, the most recent in October last year at Minsmere RSPB, Suffolk.

BRIAN THOMPSON

BIRDBGUIDES



Subscribe to our bird news services from as little as £40 per year

With BirdGuides.com, read the latest bird news in a way that suits you.

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH ALL THE RARITY REPORTS THIS WINTER:



On your computer

View sightings across Britain and Ireland, as well as major rarities from the whole of the Western Palearctic, or just monitor your county or local patch, using **www.birdguides.com**.

Access listings, features, photos and finders' reports with your **Bird News Extra** subscription.



Via email

Have your chosen sightings delivered direct to your inbox.

Just specify the county and level of rarity, and create settings for different times of the day and week with **Email Alerts**.



Via text

Receive the bird news you want via text message.

With a subscription you will receive 100 texts – simply select which news you want to hear about when you sign up to **Text Alerts**.



On your tablet or smartphone

Download the BirdGuides.com app on iOS or Android and access sightings in a clear, convenient way anywhere.

Simply log into the app and view all the news and latest photos with **Bird News Anywhere**.

Subscribe online today at **www.birdguides.com**

Get our **FREE**
weekly newsletter
– sign up now at
birdguides.com

Scarcities: October 2015

Passerines pile in



Large numbers of northern warblers, crests and pipits headlined a month where regular migrants were present in abundance, writes **Josh Jones**.



This Radde's Warbler lingered for six days from 14th, at School, Fair Isle, Shetland, where it was photographed on 16th.

LEE GREGORY



Much of the British east coast enjoyed a fruitful October. The middle fortnight of the month produced sustained periods of easterly airflow which culminated in excellent numbers of common and scarce migrants arriving right up the length of the country. Norfolk seemed to fare particularly well, with locals describing it as one of the most

memorable and rewarding periods for birding they'd ever seen along the county's coastline.

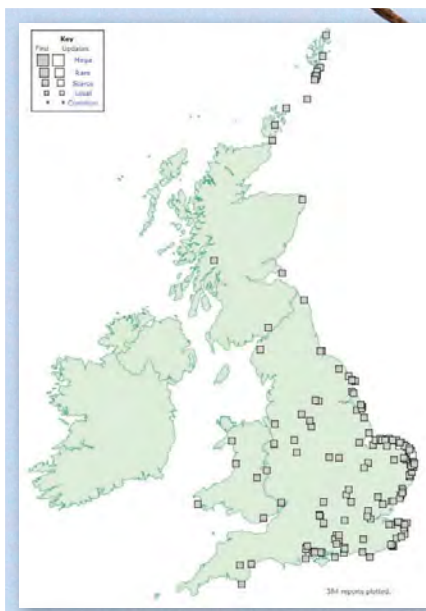
The most numerous representative of the mid-month fall was Goldcrest, with many thousands of individuals of this species strewn along the coast, occupying just about every habitat imaginable – it was hard to go anywhere without hearing their calls. Also associated were large

numbers of Robins, thrushes (though more of these came in the final week of the month) and finches, including good numbers of Bramblings.

Among them were scarcities, most notably what must be one of the best arrivals of Great Grey Shrikes on record. From 14-20th, at least 100 birds arrived at 89 sites, with several locations managing counts of up

to three. Norfolk was particularly productive, with at least 25 recorded. More continued to arrive in the final 10 days (although in much reduced numbers), and by the end of the month a good spread of birds was present on traditional wintering grounds.

It was also one of the best Octobers in recent memory for Pallas's Warbler, with at least 35 in the week from 14th – certainly



A Blue Tit looks on as a Great Grey Shrike tucks into its Robin prey on Holy Island, Northumberland, on 11th. The tit watched the gory activity for up to six minutes, apparently unfazed, while the shrike got mobbed by a Great Tit during its meal.

Inset: Great Grey Shrike arrivals this October, illustrated by this BirdGuides.com map. At least 150 birds arrived from 2nd, meaning that many less regular sites hosted individuals as well as the usual wintering territories.

ANDY MOULD



The 21 Dusky Warblers reported to BirdGuides.com during October included this bird on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 11th, a day that also featured Glossy Ibis, Siberian Chiffchaff and Barred Warbler on the isle.

RON MCINTYRE



In an autumn that saw Scilly somewhat back on the map as a legendary rarity hot-spot, this smart Olive-backed Pipit at Little Arthur Farm, St Martin's, on 19th had strong competition from rarer species.

PHILIP PARSONS



At least 57 Pallas's Warblers in Britain included several in Kent, one of which was this showy individual at Graveney Marshes, near Seasalter on the county's north coast, on 17th.

RICH BONSER



ZAC HINCHCLIFFE

Another choice scarcity on Scilly was this Short-toed Lark on St Mary's on 13th which put in a protracted stay from 8-26th on the airfield, a fairly regular site for this otherwise quite unpredictable species.

the species' best showing in a decade. Numbers were reduced thereafter, although a fresh pulse on 27th saw at least eight arrive (and a handful in the days following), meaning the month's total must have been well in excess of 50.

Around 20 Dusky Warblers appeared from Unst, Shetland, to Scilly, though few were particularly showy – the most reliable was a bird that spent eight days at Gibraltar Point, Lincs, from 14th. About half as many Radde's Warblers appeared following the first on Inishbofin, Co Galway, on 6th, with a bird at Holkham, Norfolk, on 11-12th being one of the more popular individuals.

Pipits and warblers

With more than 30 recorded during October alone, it seems a long time ago that Olive-backed Pipit was considered a true rarity, despite still being considered by the Rarities Committee up to the end of 2012. Late news of a bird identified from photos taken at Bolus Head on 30 September meant that 'OBP' was newly added to Co Kerry's avifauna in October. The most notable of the rest was a delightfully confiding and well-watched bird at Muckleburgh Hill, Norfolk, from 15-18th, though several obliged on Shetland and at least three were seen on Fair Isle.

After late September's influx, Blyth's Reed Warbler numbers gradually tailed away; half-a-dozen were seen, including a showy bird in Wells Woods, Norfolk, for a week from 13th and another on Cape Clear, Co Cork, from 14-17th. Marsh Warblers were extremely thin on the ground with the best

showing on the final day of the month, when birds were seen on Scilly and in Devon.

Other typical scarce migrants included at least 50 Barred Warblers and Red-breasted Flycatchers, around 15 each of Red-backed Shrike and Wryneck, a dozen European Serins and 10 Common Rosefinches. As many as 100 Richard's Pipits included several twos and threes, with a peak day count of five on Fair Isle.

A few interesting ringing controls included a Red-breasted Flycatcher ringed on Skokholm, Pembs, on 6th being caught again at Kilbaha, Co Clare, on 14th. A Yellow-browed Warbler ringed at Gibraltar Point, Lincs, early in the month was trapped a week later in Nanjizal valley, Cornwall, while a Goldcrest trapped at Flamborough Head, East Yorks, on 13th was controlled at Cannock Chase, Staffs, just three days later.

In a month that registered only eight Hoopoes nationwide, it was something of a surprise that two of these were seen in land-locked Herefordshire. One spent 11 days around Stretton Sugwas GP from 8th, but was generally mobile and elusive, while the other was a little more confiding as it lingered in a pub garden in Whitney-on-Wye for three days from 10th. Other notable records came from Isle of May, Fife, from 6-11th and Sandside Bay, Orkney, on 10-11th.

The first Shore Lark of the autumn was a confiding bird at Blyth, Northumbs, from 12-17th; it was followed by records from Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent. The only Short-toed Lark was a long-staying bird on St Mary's airfield, Scilly, from 8-26th.



A white-morph Snow Goose arrived among Barnacle Geese at Caerlaverock, Dumfries and Galloway, on 6th and lingered until the month's end; elsewhere records of blue morphs with Pink-feet in Moray and Nairn, Angus and Perthshire likely all relate to the same individual slowly moving south. Several Black Brants returned to coastal counties between Devon and Lincolnshire, the exception being a returning adult in Tralee Bay, Co Kerry.

A good showing of as many as 10 American Wigeon included several returning drakes; up to four were seen around Orkney, while familiar faces reappeared at Tullaghan, Co Leitrim, and Culdaff, Co Donegal. Ten drake Green-winged Teal were identified as they moulted into breeding plumage – again this included returning birds, such as those at Caerlaverock WWT and Loch Gruinart, Islay.

Three drake Lesser Scaup included a new bird on Achill Island, Co Mayo, on 18-19th, while eight Ring-necked Ducks included a confiding drake at Startops End Res, Herts, from 2nd and another alongside the Lesser Scaup at Cardiff Bay, Glamorgan, from 22nd. The drake Ferruginous Duck remained in Hampshire and another was at Washington WWT, Co Durham, from 30th.

While not the biggest witnessed in recent times, there was nevertheless a noticeable influx of Glossy Ibises throughout October, with western areas particularly productive. At least 20 individuals were

seen, including a flock of six at Smerwick Harbour, Co Kerry, on 19-20th, and at least three others in the county at that time. Five reached as far north as Fair Isle, Shetland, on 2nd but all had either succumbed or departed by mid-month.

Waders big and small

There was a decent spread of Cattle Egrets, with most records coming from south-west England. Peak counts were of four over Apex Leisure Park, Somerset, on 1st and two at Teigngrace, Devon, from 29th. Others were seen in Glamorgan and Co Wexford, while one even reached as far north as Collafirth, Shetland, on 16th, lingering there to 26th. Great Egrets now seem very much established in Britain, with up to eight regularly roosting at Dungeness, Kent, and a new single-site record for Northamptonshire made at Pitsford Res when five were seen on 23rd. Purple Herons were noted at Lough Beg, Co Cork, on 1st and Steart Marshes WWT, Somerset, on 14th.

It was another unremarkable month for scarce waders, with 20 Pectoral, eight White-rumped and just two Buff-breasted Sandpipers seen nationwide. Temminck's Stints were found in Orkney, West Yorkshire and Somerset. American Golden Plover was one of the few shorebirds that did show up in reasonable numbers, with around 20 recorded across Britain and Ireland including a long-staying and well-watched juvenile at Kilnsea, East Yorks, from 10th.

Following autumn



MIKE ROBINSON (MIKESBIRDPICS.WEEBLY.COM)

A decent wave of Red-breasted Flycatcher reports began in September, but peaked in October with up to 45 birds in Britain and Ireland including this confiding individual at Flamborough, East Yorkshire, from 11-13th.

2014's influx, it was good to see another strong arrival of Rough-legged Buzzards throughout the month, with birds reported from almost 50 sites nationwide. It's always difficult to gauge the exact numbers of this wide-ranging species due to overlap in records, but Norfolk certainly boasted a good proportion: birds were reported from a dozen sites and included two together at a site in the east of the county. Individually, it was hard to look past the frosty juvenile at Holland Haven, Essex, from 20th for its sheer tameness, regularly delighting both birders and local walkers alike as it showed down to a few metres.

A major influx of 'eared owls' also appears to be

under way, with above-average numbers of both species registered arriving between Kent and Shetland, Short-eared being particularly numerous. Indeed, there were some extraordinary counts: 38 on Fair Isle on 29th was a record total for the island and hinted that thousands more are likely to have crossed the North Sea during the month. Indeed there were some fantastic images of birds received from various oil rigs and ships en route, often showing both species side-by-side – something very rarely seen. It looks like it'll be a particularly productive winter for both species across Britain and Ireland. ■

BIRDBUIDES 

Not the most likely location for Glossy Ibis sightings, this incongruous flock of five frequented the sheep fields of Fair Isle between 2-10th, though a couple went missing towards the end of their stay.



IAN ANDREWS

Birdfinders

For all your top birdwatching destinations Worldwide



Still on your ABA wish list?
We can help

Texas for £2095

One of Britain's most successful birdwatching holiday companies

**Run by Birders for Birders
Stop Wishing Start Packing!**

01258 839066 info@birdfinders.co.uk www.birdfinders.co.uk

Bird Journal

Get your 2016 list off to a flying start
Visit us at www.BirdJournal.com



- Record anything
- Explore your records
- Share your records
- Access anywhere
- Remember forever
- Bring your data



Sunbird

'The best of birdwatching tours'



- * Stunning Birds * Wonderful Destinations *
- * Expert leaders * Friendly Groups *
- * 34 Years in the business *



Visit www.sunbirdtours.co.uk for full details of our programme of worldwide escorted tours.

Email sunbird@sunbirdtours.co.uk
Tel: 01767 262522



Sunbird, 26B The Market Square, Potton,
Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2NP



Great birding

Great value

Great fun



HOW
CLOSE
IS **NOW?**



MONARCH 
10x30 6.7" WP

Look out! Life is full of exciting moments.

Your patience is rewarded with stunning observations of nature. Likewise, your high standards demand the finest quality optical equipment. As one of the world's leading camera manufacturers, we provide you with a full range of optical excellence from high-performance binoculars to compact fieldscopes for long distance observations and digiscoping. Our innovative technology ensures that you will be able to focus on nature's best scenes.

**Nikon adventure optics:
made to discover the magic!**

www.nikon.co.uk/so/nature



Optical Excellence Since 1917

Western Palearctic: October 2015

A mighty fall on the Azores

Josh Jones reports on a month when the Azores – and particularly Corvo – were on fire with a spectacular arrival of American passerines.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak was one of several species that were deposited en masse on Corvo, Azores, despite apparently fairly uninspiring conditions in the archipelago.

PETER ALFREY

It was another memorable month on Corvo, Azores, as the peak migration weeks produced the best and most varied show of Nearctic (and European) vagrants to reach the island since 2005. Two firsts for the Azores came in the form of Arctic and Wood Warblers on 3rd, with a second Wood Warbler found on 5th.

The first Veery for the Azores was discovered on 15th, but it was otherwise slow going until 17th. Just when it was looking like it might be a quiet

year, an incredible fall took place, with Blue-winged Warbler found that day among multiple Red-eyed Vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers. The 'big' bird came on 18th when the Western Palearctic's first Eastern Wood Pewee was discovered; extraordinarily, this was followed by a second individual on 20th.

Another 'WP' first came on 20th when a 'Brewster's Warbler' was discovered at Ribeira da Ponte; this may well be a hybrid between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers, but its mixed ancestry should take nothing

away from it being another fantastic record for the island. Further highlights included two Black-throated Blue Warblers, the Azores' second Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes on 20th and 24th respectively, and the first record of Ruby-crowned Kinglet for the archipelago on 31st – this last just the fourth or fifth WP record. More regular species were also well represented, with peak day counts of 11 Red-eyed Vireos on 18th and at least 10 Indigo Buntings on 21st.

On other islands in the Azores, a Brown Booby was photographed

off Santa Maria on 7th and both American Coot and Wood Duck were seen on Flores, the latter a returning drake. A Chimney Swift was over Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 27th.

Elsewhere, the most outstanding of the month's records was the occurrence of a Black-crowned Sparrow Lark at Batumi, Georgia, on 2nd – unsurprisingly a national first and a quite astonishing record. Georgia's first Pallas's Warbler was also seen at Batumi on 29th.

A Baltimore Oriole was found on Værøy, Norway, on 3rd and



DANIELE OCCHIATO



DANIELE OCCHIATO



ERIC DIDNER

Above left: this Blue-winged Warbler accompanied several Red-eyed Vireos on Corvo, as more surprisingly did a 'Brewster's Warbler' a few days later – a hybrid between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. **Above centre:** Eastern Wood Pewee was this year's major record on 18th – a long-awaited Western Palearctic first, which was then followed by a second just two days later. **Above right:** despite there being 10 records in Britain, this Veery, also on Corvo, was a first record for the Azores, and was found on 15th.



CORENTIN MORVAN

Above: among the residual American rarities in the region (compared to the Azores) was this Red-eyed Vireo in France, discovered on Molène Island, Brittany, on 9th.

Right: this first-winter Northern Oriole at Værøy, on the Lofoten Islands, Norway, on 5th will be the country's second record, if accepted. The first was from Rogaland in 1986, the same year the finder of the second bird was born!

remained there to 11th, and a Brown Shrike was also present for the first day of a three-day stay at Ervika. It was otherwise a disappointingly quiet month for Scandinavia, although drakes of both Stejneger's and American White-winged Scoters returned to the Danish coast at Blåvand from 15th.

Iceland produced a Red-eyed Vireo at Stokkseyri on 21-22nd, while late news concerned the country's third Mediterranean Gull at Höfn on 30th. Not far away from Shetland, a female Steller's Eider at the southern end of Suðuroy, Faroe Islands, on 13th was tantalising for British birders.

Israel enjoyed a productive month with three records of Pin-tailed Snipe. The first was at Nir Oz from 5-7th, and was quickly followed by another at Kfar Ruppim from 7-17th, with the latter trapped and ringed on 11th; a third then appeared at Habesor Reservoir, also in the Negev, on 12th. If accepted, these will

constitute the 9-11th records for the country. The Pink-backed Pelican was still around on 13th, while a Bateleur was reported over Oranit on 17th and there was an exceptional Mediterranean coast record of White-eyed Gull from Zikim on 3rd.

The highlight of a quiet month for Spain was two Royal Terns at Tarifa on 12th. Italy was quiet, too, with the lingering Western Reef Heron still on Sicily on 7th and the Black-winged Kite still in Novara on 11th. Malta's fourth Paddyfield Warbler was at Simar NR on 30th.

France's headline birds all came from north-west Brittany, the best of which was probably the Brown Shrike on Ouessant on 21st, although Caspian Stonechat and Isabelline Wheatear there on 18th and 27th respectively were also great records. A Red-eyed



An unprecedented fall of Cyprus Wheatears in Israel – where the species is an annual rarity – included this bird at Tel-Aviv north beach on 30th. Most of the population migrates to Africa from Cyprus in late October, but this year exceptionally strong westerly winds and rain in the eastern Mediterranean resulted in an arrival of at least 100 individuals.



Vireo proved twitchable on Molène Island on 9-10th.

The Netherlands registered yet another Black-winged Kite on 30th, at Wimmenum, Noord-Holland. Friesland produced the ninth Dutch Blyth's Pipit on 9th, while the Long-legged Buzzard returned to Maasvlakte for the third winter. A White's Thrush was seen inland to the north of Bremen, Germany, on 8th. ■

BIRDBGUIDES 



DOMINIC STANDING

Having set himself the goal of examining every snipe he came across this autumn, the photographer discovered this Pin-tailed Snipe at his local sewage pond at Nir Oz, Israel, on 5th; it was one of two in the country in October.

OZ HORINE

HÅVARD EGGEN



OPTICAL CENTRE

ED FF

8x42 • 10x42

BRINGING A NEW LEVEL OF VIEWING EXPERIENCE THE ED-FF PROVIDES STUNNING EDGE TO EDGE CLARITY THANKS TO THE FIELD FLATTENING LENSES.

Key Features

- Premium multi low dispersion ED glass
- Field flattening glass
- Rugged rubber arm/body
- Lightweight magnesium alloy
- Ultra flat of view
- Fully waterproof
- Chromatic coating reduces colour fringing



FROM

£399.99

ED PRO

8x42 • 10x42

THIS PREMIUM MODEL ENABLES YOU TO CAPTURE NATURE IN AMAZING CLARITY AND DETAIL WITH CLEAR AND NEUTRAL COLOUR REPRODUCTION.

Key Features

- ED glass objective lenses providing brighter, sharper images
- Ergonomic apex hinge design
- Magnesium alloy body
- Full waterproof
- Chlorine protective lens coating
- Rugged yet lightweight
- Wide field of view
- Outstanding build quality



FROM

£599.99

50mm ED PRO

50mm • 12-36x Zoom Eyepiece

PREMIUM COMPACT SCOPE WITH HIGH QUALITY ED GLASS.

ONLY

£399.00

Key Features

- High performance ED glass
- Easy to use focusing
- Ergonomic design
- Rugged rubber arm/body
- Outstanding build quality
- Retractable sun shield
- Fully compact size



IN STOCK NOW!



10x30 AIS Image Stabilised Monocular

No.1 Destination for all things photographic and optical

london camera exchange

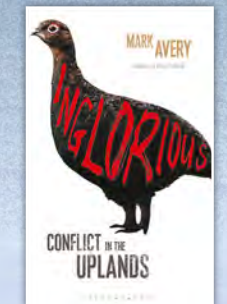
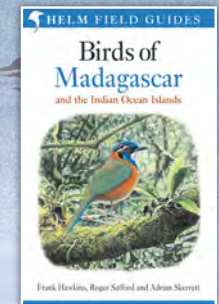
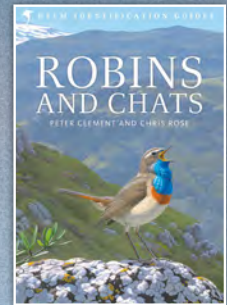
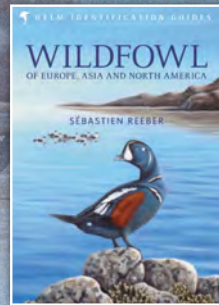
15 The Square, Winchester. SO23 9ES

01962 866203

email: winchester@LCEgroup.co.uk



Enjoy Birding this Christmas with Expert Guidance



bloomsburywildlife.com | [chiffchat](https://twitter.com/chiffchat) | www.bloomsbury.com/naturalhistory

BLOOMSBURY

The gift for the fussy bird

WOODLAND TRUST

Robins aren't keen on bath bombs. But they do love woodland.
If you're looking for a present for someone fussy, give the gift of a home for wildlife.
You can visit any time, and you will help our work protecting, restoring and creating the woods we all love, and the wildlife that relies on them.

DEDICATE A TREE | DEDICATE WOODLAND | PLANT A TREE

From £15. Visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/specialdedications or call 0330 333 5302

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales no. 294344 and in Scotland no. SC038885. 7522 11/15



Where to watch birds



- 1** Caerlaverock WWT, Dumfries and Galloway. Pages 25-27
- 2** Blue House Farm and Stow Marsh, Essex. Page 28
- 3** Severnside, Somerset. Page 29
- 4** Killybegs, Co Donegal. Page 30

MORE DECEMBER SITES

- Alnmouth to Lindisfarne, Northumberland: bit.ly/bw258AlnmouthLindisfarne
- The Ayrshire coast: bit.ly/bw258AyrshireCoast
- Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire: bit.ly/bw258BelvideRes
- Cloonlaughnan and Funshinagh Turloughs, Co Roscommon: bit.ly/bw258CloonlaughnanFunshinagh
- The Dee Estuary, Cheshire: bit.ly/bw246DeeEstuary
- Findhorn and Burghhead Bays, Moray: bit.ly/bw234FindhornBurghheadBays
- Llys-y-frân Reservoir, Pembrokeshire: bit.ly/bw246LlysfranRes
- Pagham Harbour, West Sussex: bit.ly/bw246PaghamHarbour
- Riverside CP, Kent: bit.ly/bw258RiversideCP
- The Wash, Norfolk: bit.ly/bw234TheWash



1 SITE OF THE MONTH CAERLAVEROCK

This Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve on the Solway Firth attracts huge numbers of wintering geese and swans, as well as a variety of other wildfowl and waders. It is a prime site for a visit in December, says **Brian Morrell**.



BRIAN MORRELL

The Solway Firth attracts numerous wintering Whooper Swans (seen here with their more regular relatives, Mute Swan). Attend one of the scheduled swan feeds for superb close-up views.

Caerlaverock WWT lies on the north shore of the Solway Firth and is renowned as one of the best places to experience the spectacular sights and sounds of wintering wildfowl. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) manages more than 1,500 acres at Caerlaverock, and the reserve's viewing facilities offer perspectives over all the habitats.

The site lies nine miles south-east of Dumfries. Follow the brown tourist signs from the A75 west of Annan or St Michael's church in Dumfries itself.

The entire Svalbard breeding population of **Barnacle Geese** spends the whole winter on the Solway and can be seen during the day feeding on the fields and marshes from the viewing facilities. These include four towers, two observatories, and three large and 20 small hides.

Chance of Snow

From these vantage points, you can scan the huge flocks of Barnacle Geese to see if there are any more unusual species among them. So far this winter, a **Snow**

USEFUL CONTACTS

Travel information and timetables

- **Traveline:** 0871 200 2233 or www.traveline.info
- **Traveline Scotland:** 0871 200 2233 or www.travelinescotland.com
- **Traveline Cymru:** 0871 200 2233 or www.traveline-cymru.info

- **Stagecoach Bus:** www.stagecoachbus.com
- **Arriva Bus:** 0844 800 4411 or www.arrivabus.co.uk
- **National Rail:** 0845 748 4950 or www.nationalrail.com
- **Sustrans:** 0117 926 8893 or www.sustrans.org.uk

National bird news

BirdGuides.com: for all bird news and to report your own sightings, call 0333 577 2473, email sightings@birdguides.com or visit www.birdguides.com

Mapping

Access fully interactive and annotated Google maps for all

itineraries at bit.ly/BWMaps.

Further information

- **County bird recorders:** www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/bird-recording/county-bird-recorders
- **Birdwatch Bookshop:** for discounted birding books see www.birdwatch.co.uk/store

Goose and three leucistic Barnacle Geese have been recorded. Past records have included **Red-breasted**, **Ross's**, **Pale-bellied** and **Dark-bellied Brent**, **Taiga Bean**, and **Greenland White-fronted** and **European White-fronted Geese** – all of which could show up again. **Pink-footed**, **Greylag** and **Canada Geese** are generally to be seen too.

Eurasian Teal and **Eurasian Wigeon** can be seen in their thousands. These again may harbour rarities, especially North American vagrants such as **Green-winged Teal** – which has been recorded for the last five years – and **American Wigeon**.

Swans crossing

Hundreds of Icelandic **Whooper Swans** can be seen close up at the twice-daily swan feeds at 11 am and 2 pm at the new Sir Peter Scott Observatory **1**. Occasionally a **Bewick's Swan** joins them, although there have only been odd sightings in recent years.

Thousands of waders wheel on the Solway tide, including numbers of **Oystercatcher**, **Knot**, **Dunlin** and **European Golden Plover**. **Peregrine Falcon**, **Merlin** and **Hen Harrier** can all be seen hunting over the marshes. Big wintering flocks of **Northern Lapwings** and **Eurasian Curlews** are also present. A long-staying **Bittern** was around in late September/early October and **Water Rails** and **Kingfishers** are often seen daily.

A mixed bunting flock can be seen



REINT JAKOB SCHUT (WWW.AGAMI.NL)

Hawthorn berries will attract winter thrushes such as Redwing (front) and Fieldfare (behind).

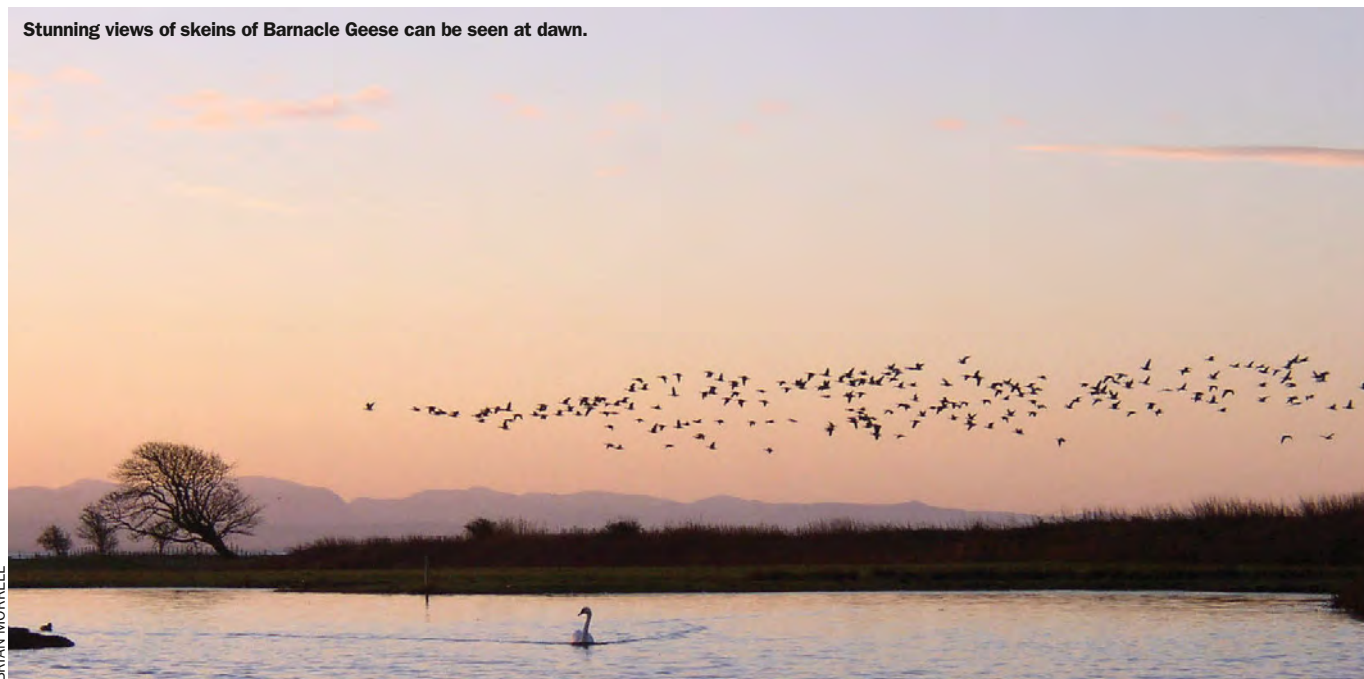
feeding on the spilled grain. Often more than 50 **Yellowhammers** can be present, along with smaller numbers of **Reed Buntings**; **Tree Sparrows** may also be seen.

The Farmhouse Tower **2** in the yard beside the visitor centre is well worth the climb to the top as it gives a panoramic view over the reserve and overlooks Folly Pond, which can be good for ducks and waders. Nearby Folly Pond Hide has a

low-level view over the back of the pond and is good for Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, **Northern Shoveler**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Common Redshank** and **Common Snipe**.

There are two screened avenues **3** which are about half a mile long and have banks and hedges to allow access to the outer tower hides, without disturbing birds in the adjacent fields. Both of these wildlife corridors are alive

Stunning views of skeins of Barnacle Geese can be seen at dawn.



BRIAN MORRELL



BRIAN MORRELL

Some 35,000 Barnacle Geese – the entire population breeding on Svalbard – winter on the Solway. During the day many thousands of these birds can be seen feeding on the fields and marshes at Caerlaverock. Remember to check the flocks carefully for rarer goose species.

with birds feeding on the hawthorn berries and can be good for **Fieldfares** and **Redwings**, as well as bands of **Long-tailed Tits**, **Goldcrests** and redpolls. Caerlaverock's Badger clan also has setts in each avenue.

The Saltcote Merse Observatory **4** is situated at the high tide line at the edge of the saltmarsh and looks out over the Solway to the south, with the Lake

District fells visible on a clear day. This comes into its own at high tide, with huge flocks of Oystercatcher, Knot and Dunlin wheeling on the incoming tide. These are often chased by Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and occasionally Hen Harrier. It is best to be there at least an hour before high tide to watch it bring the birds in.

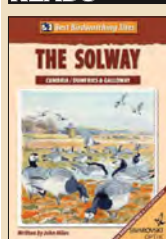
The three-storey Avenue Tower **5**

overlooks the best goose grazing fields and also the flood area, which can be full of Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler and **Northern Pintail**. Waders such as Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Eurasian Curlew, Northern Lapwing and Common Snipe are often present too, and this was where Britain's second-ever White-tailed Lapwing also turned up in 2007. ■



VISITOR INFORMATION

READS



Best Birdwatching Sites: the Solway
by John Miles
(Buckingham Press, £17.50) –
order from £16.50
on page 63.

> Sites and access

Caerlaverock WWT is open daily from 10 am–5 pm, except for Christmas Day. Entry is £7.99 or free to members. The nearest train station is nine miles away at Dumfries. Stagecoach Bus runs a limited bus service to the centre, via service D6A. The reserve is on Sustrans National Cycle Route 7. There is good disabled access at the site, including parking, toilets and access to most hides, including a lift to the tower in the Sir Peter Scott Observatory.

> Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer 322 and Landrangers 84 and 85.

> Web resources

- www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/caerlaverock for more information on the site.
- www.the-soc.org.uk for the Scottish Bird Club, with details of local branches.
- Follow on Twitter: @WWTCaerlaverock and @ScottishBirding.



See bit.ly/BWMaps for links to the fully annotated Google maps.

ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPPING © CROWN COPYRIGHT. AM45/10

2

BLUE HOUSE FARM AND STOW MARSH

By Ed Hutchings

Where and why

This 660-acre farm is situated on the north bank of the River Crouch and has been managed by Essex Wildlife Trust since 1998. The Flat Fields have been grassland for the past century and are used as feeding grounds for approximately 2,000 Brent Geese that come to the area during the winter.

The remainder of the farm is comprised of coastal grazing marsh, with ancient creeks and hollows betraying its saltmarsh origins. A wind pump was installed in July 2008 and this raises water levels on a 50-acre field. This area is surface flooded during the winter months, bringing in huge numbers of wildfowl and waders.

The Arable Reversion is a grassland area sown with native grass seeds. It is particularly good for Barn Owl.

CONOR MOLLOY



Route planner

Take the B1012 east from South Woodham Ferrers and after about 3 miles turn right to North Fambridge. Access is via a track (Blue House Farm Chase) on a sharp right-hand bend on the left of Fambridge Road, 400 m south of Fambridge station, which leads to the visitor's car park (TQ 856971) ①. A permissive path passes around the farm, giving access to the three bird hides. This links up with the seawall footpath which can then be taken back to the farm entrance and car park, creating a 2.5-mile circular route around the farm.

Head east from the car park across the Flat Fields, enjoying the spectacle of up to 2,000 **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** which are often seen grazing on the short turf. Scan the flocks for the **Pale-bellied** form, which does

occur, as does the occasional **Black Brant**. **Skylark** is regularly seen.

The path curls left to the north and eventually brings you to the first hide (TQ 864974) ②, which involves a short diversion on the left. This offers excellent views over the Flooded Fields, brim-full of overwintering wildfowl and waders, particularly **Northern Lapwing**, **European Golden Plover**, **Dunlin**, **Eurasian Wigeon** and **Eurasian Teal**.

Return to the path and continue east for a short distance until you come to the second hide on the left (TQ 867972) ③. This overlooks the Arable Reversion, which supports the occasional **Grey Partridge**. This area is especially good for **Barn Owl**, so a late afternoon visit may suit. In most winters, **Short-eared Owl** and **Hen Harrier** occur, too.

Leave the hide and continue to follow the patch south for a short distance to the third hide (TQ 870968) ④. This gives commanding views of the Fleets – two expanses of open water beyond the Flat Fields. The fleet nearest the seawall is deeper, staying wet all year round, and therefore supports diving duck such as **Tufted Duck**, as well as **Little Grebe**. **Eurasian Teal** and **Shelduck** are both commonly seen here. High tide is the time to visit, as waders move onto the Fleets from the mudflats beyond the seawall.

To the right is Cuckoo Marsh. This traditional grazing marsh attracts waders such as **Common Redshank**, **Eurasian Curlew** and **Common Snipe**. **Oystercatcher** and **Black-tailed Godwit** prevail on the intertidal areas. With patience, you should see **Bearded**

Tit in the reeds surrounding the fleet nearest the seawall. The occasional **Spoonbill** and **Great Egret** occur here, and White-tailed Eagle has visited recently.

Leave the hide and continue south until you reach the seawall (TQ 869966) ⑤. Turn right and follow the seawall, with the River Crouch on your left. From the seawall you can view the river, where there is the possibility of overwintering divers, grebes or seaduck.

You then have the option of taking the path on the right back to the car park or continuing on to North Fambridge Marina (TQ 852964) ⑥. From here you can scan Stow Marsh, where **Bittern** has been seen in recent winters. To return to the car park, follow Ferry Lane, taking the footpath on the left and then turn left where the paths cross. ■



VISITOR INFORMATION

READS



Where to Watch Birds in Britain by Simon Harrap and Nigel Redman (second edition, Christopher Helm, £19.99) – order for £18.99 on page 77.

Sites and access

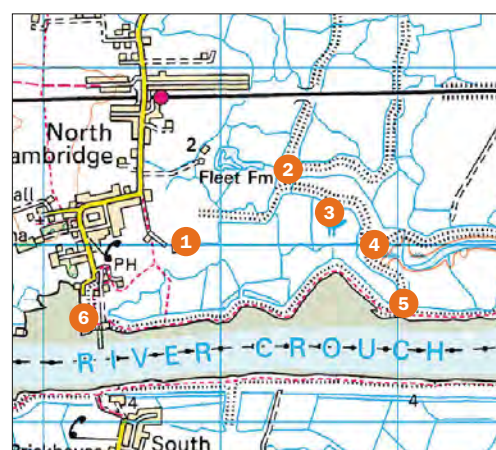
The reserve is accessible at all times and entry is free, including car parking. The closest train station is at North Fambridge, from where it's a 10-minute walk to the reserve. The site isn't particularly suitable for disabled access. The EWT has replaced stiles with pedestrian gates, but the paths are grass and there are steps. Furthermore, the route is about 2.5 miles long and can get very wet during the winter. Toilets and refreshments are available at the nearby Ferryboat Inn in North Fambridge (TQ 853968).

Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorers 175 and 176 and Landranger 168.

Web resources

- www.essexwt.org.uk for details of this and other nearby reserves.
- www.ebws.org.uk for local bird news and sightings.
- Follow on Twitter: @EssexWildlife.



See bit.ly/BWMaps for links to fully annotated Google maps

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2015 ORDNANCE SURVEY MEDIA 052/15

3 SEVERNSIDE

By Paul Bowerman

Where and why

Severnside is centred on the village of Severn Beach, with easy access along the Severn Way footpath on the seawall. December is one of the quietest months, but still has had a total of 160 species recorded. It is one of the best sites in the region for close views of Turnstones and regular afternoon viewing of hunting Short-eared Owl.

The variety and number of birds are influenced by both tidal conditions and the weather. Near high tide visits are essential to view the shore and saltmarsh south of Severn Beach. Cold weather produces higher numbers of waders and wildfowl. South-west gales at this time of year have produced Leach's Storm-petrel, Little Auk and Pomarine Skua and always turn up something of interest.

Route planner

Severnside is easily accessed by car from the A403, from either the M48 or M5 motorway junctions. Start at Severn Beach ①. Walk north along the Severn Way, scanning the river for any flocks of duck and the footpath for the ever-present **Rock Pipits** and occasional **Black Redstart**; a male Desert Wheatear was found here in December 2013.

Continue for half a mile until you reach a rocky beach (ST 538856) which is the regular high-tide roost site for up to 250 **Turnstones** and, if you are lucky, a **Purple Sandpiper**. This stretch of seawall is the best place to look for storm-blown seabirds in south-westerly gales, as they



PAUL BOWERMAN

A rocky stretch of sand about half a mile from Severn Beach provides a high-tide roost for waders. Search through the more regular species for the chance of Purple Sandpiper.

resist passing beyond the huge concrete structure of the Second Severn Crossing.

From here, continue on foot to New Passage (ST 544865) ②. This is an excellent viewpoint at any state of the tide; be warned, however, that it can be eye-watering cold in a north wind.

You are guaranteed to see hundreds of **Eurasian Wigeon** and **Eurasian Teal**, with **Shelduck**, **Northern Shoveler**

and a few **Northern Pintail**. At high tide, the wintering **Dunlin**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Common Redshank** and **Oystercatcher** flocks will be roosting on the grazed saltmarsh just across the freshwater pill. If you are present when the local **Peregrine Falcons** are hunting, you will be treated to the spectacular sight of everything flying in panic. When the mud flats are exposed, the waders will

be seen feeding at the mouth of the pill and along the shoreline.

The footpath beyond here heading along Northwick Warth towards Aust Warth and the old Severn Bridge is a grass-covered bank and can be muddy in wet weather, but is worth the walk to at least the second yellow-coloured sentry box. To the east of the footpath is the newly created Pilning Wetland ③, where freshwater pools and scrapes attract **Common** and **Jack Snipe**, a few **Water Rails**, **Northern Lapwing** and Eurasian Curlew. The wintering flock of several hundred **Canada Geese** is worth looking through for the occasional **Dark-bellied Brent** or **White-fronted Goose** that joins them.

The fence posts and larger pieces of driftwood here are a regular perch for wintering **Merlins** as they sit and wait to launch themselves at the **Meadow Pipits** and **Skylarks**. In recent winters up to 10,000 **Starlings** have roosted in the small reedbed next to the footpath (ST 550866) ④, and the murmuration is impressive and loud as they fly just metres above.

More energetic visiting birders can continue walking north until they reach Aust Warth ⑤ for a late afternoon **Short-eared Owl** display. Typically there are one or two present most winters, but there have been up to seven and if you are lucky they will be joined by a **Barn Owl**. Most people, however, drive to Passage Road (ST 561883) at Aust Warth, where there is lots of parking and you can view the action from a warm car. ■

i VISITOR INFORMATION

READS



Where to Watch Birds in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire by Ken Hall and John Govett (Christopher Helm, third edition, £20) – order from £17.99 on page 63.

> Sites and access

There is free public access to all sites. Car parking is free and on public roads in Severn Beach and next to Aust Warth. There is a train service from Bristol to Severn Beach. Local bus services are run by First Group (call 0117 244 4040 or see www.firstgroup.com/bristol-bath-and-west). Many of the paths are unimproved and can be very muddy in winter.

> Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer 167 and Landranger 172.

> Web resources

- www.severnsidebirds.co.uk for daily updates, sightings and photos.
- Follow on Twitter: @severnsidebirds.



See bit.ly/BWMaps for links to fully annotated Google maps

4

KILLYBEGS

By Derek Charles

Where and why

Killybegs is Ireland's premier fishing port, situated in south Co Donegal. In winter the large number of fishing vessels using the harbour combined with its location on the north-west corner of Europe makes it attractive to large numbers of gulls, especially after periods of severe weather. Vagrant gulls in recent years have included Thayer's and Slaty-backed, along with good numbers of Kumlien's, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. While larids are the main attraction, other recent winter rarities have included Killdeer, Gyr Falcon and 'blue' Fulmar.

Route planner

Killybegs is 17 miles from Donegal town. As you approach Killybegs on the N56 you will find the estuary on your left. At low tide, this area has a large gull roost, which can be viewed from the layby **1**. In good years, double-figure totals of **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls** can be present. Careful searching can often produce a **Kumlien's Gull** or two. Two years ago a **Killdeer** was found along the shore here.

Drive on to the village and check the fish factory roofs along the **2** road if there are gulls loafing. There is a hard shoulder right into the village.

As you enter Killybegs, there is a pier on the left-hand side **3**. When the fishing boats are in the harbour, this area can be extremely busy with tankers offloading the catch. There is free access to both cars and walking. This area attracts large numbers of gulls, sometimes roosting on the pier, on the water or on

various islands and pontoons in the harbour. Both the Slaty-backed and Thayer's Gulls were found in and favoured this area, and again Iceland, Glaucous and Kumlien's Gulls can often all be found among the throngs of more regular species

At high tide, large numbers of gulls amass on the factory roofs **4**. It is best to drive around to look for the best vantage points, depending on where the gulls are to be found.

In the afternoon the light can be harsh, so it might be more

productive to go around to the far side of the harbour. From here, view the roost from the small turn-off **5** or follow the road round to the small pier **6**.

A telescope is normally essential here, but the gulls can be viewed as they enter and leave the harbour to feed in Donegal Bay, where the two recent 'blue' Fulmars were seen.

December-March is the main period for gulls and their numbers are swelled in poor weather conditions. North-west gales are the optimum; both the recent

Thayer's and Slaty-backed Gulls were found in bad weather and neither stayed long once the weather cleared.

I have had peak day counts of 70 Iceland, 55 Glaucous and 10 Kumlien's Gulls. Such figures are exceptional, but there is always plenty to keep you interested. There is minimal coverage in winter, especially mid-week, and **Ross's, Ivory and Glaucous-winged Gulls** are all on the radar – Killybegs could be your best chance of finding one yourself! ■



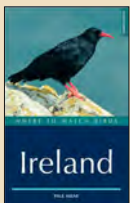
DEREK CHARLES

Large numbers of gulls follow the fishing boats as they offload their catches. Check for rarer species such as this Thayer's Gull.



VISITOR INFORMATION

READS



- **Where to Watch Birds in Ireland** by Clive Hutchinson and Paul Milne (second edition, Christopher Helm, £18.99) – order from £16.99 on page 63.
- **Finding Birds in Ireland: the Complete Guide** by Eric Dempsey and Michael O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan).

> Sites and access

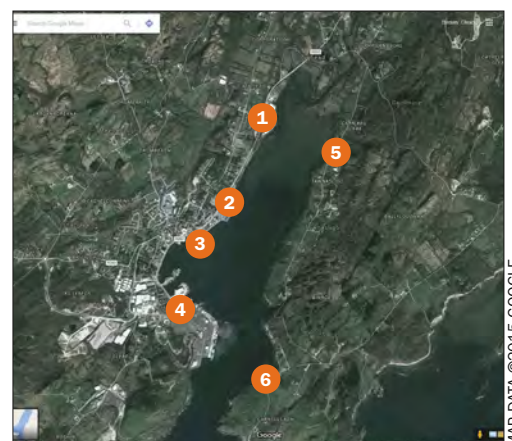
There is free public access to all sites. Parking is mainly on public roads, but charges may apply in car parks. There are no local train stations, but there is a regular bus service from Donegal town (contact Bus Eireann on 00 353 1850 836 611 or visit www.buseireann.ie). Donegal Airport has flights from Dublin and Glasgow (www.donegalairport.ie). However, a car is best to follow this itinerary. All areas can be viewed from the roads, offering disabled access.

> Maps

OSi Discovery Series 10.

> Web resources

- www.irishbirding.com for sightings, site information and more.



See bit.ly/BWMaps for links to fully annotated Google maps

MAP DATA ©2015 GOOGLE

SPRITE



Models: 10x50 & 20x50 **SRP £69.95**

SIERRA



Models:
8x32, 10x32,
8x42, 10x42, 10x50 & 12x50
SRPs from £104.95 to £129.95

SERIES 4



Non-ED Models:
8x42 & 10x42 **SRP £119.95**
ED Models:
8x42 & 10x42 **SRP £199.95**

SAVANNAH



Non-ED Models:
8x42, 10x42, 8x56, 10x56, 12x56
SRPs from £149.95 to £169.95
ED Models:
8x56, 10x56, 12x56
SRPs from £249.95 to £259.95

The Barr & Stroud SAHARA range of binoculars and spotting scopes encompasses a wide range of highly-specified quality instruments to suit your particular needs. All SAHARA products offer an excellent combination of performance and desirable features for the discerning, value-conscious outdoor enthusiast and birdwatcher.

Spotting scope features at a glance:

- Fully Multi-Coated Optics • BaK-4 Prism • Waterproof (1m depth for 1 min)
- Close-focus 8m (20-60x80 model)
- Field of View 29.6-15m@1000m (20-60x80 model)
- Nitrogen filled • Rubber Armouring
- Lightweight Polycarbonate Body • Stay-on Case

Models available in the range:

Spotting Scopes: 15-45x60, 20-70x70
& 20-60x80

SRP's from £109.95 to £149.95



Sahara 8x42



**SRPs
£109.95 to
£149.95**

"...I found the view through the scope pretty impressive... Overall the image produced is really sharp and has a pretty decent depth of field."
www.bestspotting Scopereviews.com

**SRPs
£69.95 to
£114.95**

Binocular features at a glance:

- Fully Multi-Coated Optics
- BaK-4 Prisms
- Waterproof (1.5m depth for 3 mins)
- Close-focus 2m (8x42 model)
- Field of View 129m@1000m (8x42 model)
- Nitrogen filled
- Rubber Armouring
- Lightweight Polycarbonate Body
- Twist-up Eyecups
- Carrying Case, Neckstrap, Rainguard & Lens Cloth

Models available in the range:

Binoculars: 8x25, 10x25, 8x32, 8x42, 10x42, 10x50 & 12x50

SRP's from £69.95 to £114.95

"...astonishingly good value given the design features incorporated and the resultant image delivered"
Birdwatch Magazine

Our Products are Available from Dealers throughout the UK



Please contact us, or Check our Website for your Nearest Stockist

OPTICAL VISION LTD
UNIT 3, WOOLPIT BUSINESS PARK
WOOLPIT, BURY ST. EDMUNDS
SUFFOLK IP30 9UP

OPTICAL VISION LIMITED
www.opticalvision.co.uk
www.barrandstroud.com

Importers and Distributors of Sky-Watcher
& TAL Astronomical Telescopes, Helios,
Acuter & Barr & Stroud Binoculars & Spotting
Scopes and 'Zenith' Microscopes.

A great week

CORRÈZE BIRDS

ADVERTORIAL FEATURE

Two Americans are shown French birds and a good time by a Brit, as **Debbi Rothstein** recalls.

Shortly after we arrived in France, I spotted an advert for birdwatching holidays in southwest France. We exchanged emails and then signed on for a private guided holiday. For a very reasonable fee we just had to show up and our guide, Richard Morris, made all arrangements for housing, food, transport, planning and binoculars.

While we were excited about the venture, we were also a wee bit nervous. What if we were committed to spending all that time with someone incompatible?

It was a great week and we would recommend it to anyone

looking to explore a beautiful location with someone who knows the trails and byways. Google www.birdholidays.eu.

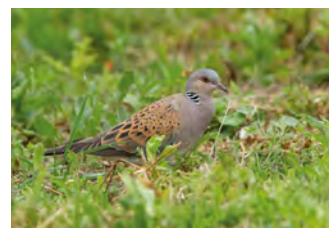
We took the train from Paris to Brive. Richard met us at the station and our first stop was lunch at a cafe in Curemonte. Next, we dropped off our luggage at a gite with a panoramic view.

We spent the afternoon on our first birding hike around Le Pescher, followed by dinner at a lovely restaurant in Collonges-la-Rouge. Tom really enjoyed their salad with chicken gizzards and, at our request, Richard explained cricket to us.

One day we drove up to the

Brenne lakes. It was a long drive, but worth it. There are 3,000 man-made lakes created for fish farming. It was a great place to watch birds on a rainy day with many comfortable hides.

Throughout the week our days were filled with medieval towns, walnut orchards, wild fruit trees, giant orange slugs, crayfish, meeting Richard's friends at dinner, the remains of village cow shoeing stanchions, picnic lunches at scenic stops on hikes along rivers, atop hills, next to wood-fired bread ovens still used by the villagers, beautiful churches, great local food and, of course, the birds of Corrèze. ■



Turtle Doves still purr in Corrézien copses and ten pairs of Red-backed Shrikes breed around the village of Le Pescher. Photographer Pierre Soulier has 200 Hawfinches on his patch (the UK has just 200 pairs). Crested Tits are found in areas of pine, and Black Woodpecker is the largest of six woodpecker species in Corrèze. All photos courtesy of Pierre Soulier

londoncameraexchange Lakeside Optics

Wise gift ideas this Christmas...



Terra NEW!
 8x25.....£255.00
 10x25.....£270.00
 Comes with a **FREE**
 case worth £29.99
Conquest HD
 8x32.....£589.99
 10x32.....£629.99
 8x42.....£699.99
 10x42.....£729.99
Victory SF
 8x42.....£1949.00
 10x42.....£1979.00
 Claim a **FREE** Zeiss binocular harness on
 Conquest and Victory full size binoculars.
PHONE NOW for pre-owned/service stock.



ZEISS
CENTRE





SWAROVSKI
OPTIK
PREMIER DEALER

EL Field Pro
 Claim a **FREE** Lowepro field
 station bag worth £70.00!
 (with EL binoculars purchase).
 8x32.....£1475.00
 10x32.....£1495.00
 8.5x42.....£1800.00
 10x42.....£1820.00
 10x50.....£1935.00
Part exchange welcome.
Limited stock available on EL SVs - Phone for details.

8x25 pocket.....	£505.00
10x25 pocket.....	£540.00
CL Companion 8x30.....	£765.00

Spotting Scopes
 ATS 80HD body only.....£1520.00
 20-60 zoom.....£369.00
 25-50 zoom.....£450.00
ATX/STX Scopes (angled or straight)
 25-60x65.....£2150.00
 25-60x85.....£2610.00
 30-70x95.....£2870.00
FREE Lowepro photo travel
 350 rucksack worth
 £91.50 with any
 scope purchase.





Leica
PREMIER DEALER

Ultravid
 8x20.....£549.00
 10x25.....£579.00
 8x32 HD+.....£1350.00
 10x32 HD.....£1299.00
 7x42HD+.....£1425.00
 8x42 HD+.....£1475.00
 10x42 HD+.....£1525.00





Trinovid
 8x20.....£359.00
 10x25.....£389.00
 8x42.....£979.00



Vortex Day
Sat 5th Dec



Great Christmas offers
with lifetime guarantee!



Binoculars & spotting scopes

Opticron Day
Sat 19th Dec



for Christmas offers and
new DBA binoculars



Series 5 and 7
binoculars in stock



Binocular range and
spotting scopes in stock



Lakeside Optics
 Chew Valley Lake, Bristol, BS40 8TF
 8 miles south of Bristol City Centre
 Find us next to Salt & Malt Tearoom

01275 332042 BUY ONLINE www.lakesideoptics.co.uk



FOLLOW US

**Phone for the latest
used range!**



DECEMBER'S TARGET BIRD

Green-winged Teal



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)



Regarded by most authorities as a full species, the American Ornithologist's Union still lists Green-winged Teal as a subspecies of Eurasian Teal. In 1990 it lost its rarity status in Britain, and the British Ornithologist's Union declared it to be a full species in 2000.

It is now a regular annual visitor to Britain, and in the last decade there have been 30-50 new records each year, with perhaps an equal or even higher number being seen as returning individuals from previous years. One notable bird returned for seven successive winters to the Hayle Estuary, Cornwall.

In Scotland records are almost annual, with a wide geographic spread but more concentrated in the Northern Isles and Outer Hebrides; in some winters up to a dozen may be present. Wales receives surprisingly few birds, and these have been seen at a wide range of sites.

Most records are from October to June, with the peak arrival time for new birds appearing to

be January and February. It is extremely difficult to differentiate females and juveniles from female and juvenile Eurasian Teal, and so virtually every British record is of an adult male. During July to September, however, most males will be in eclipse plumage, making them also very difficult to identify. The first female identified was in 1999 on Scilly; it arrived in the company of four males. Three Canadian-ringed birds have been recorded in Britain, indicating the origin of at least some British birds.

DNA analysis has shown that Green-winged Teal is more closely related to Speckled Teal of South America rather than Eurasian Teal, which it most closely resembles. Its still close relationship with the latter means that hybrids occur in the wild and have been observed in Britain, possibly from mixed pairs here.

How to see

Always check through flocks of Eurasian Teal, taking care to ensure that any likely individual

The vast majority of accepted records of Green-winged Teal are of the distinctive males. Reports are widespread across the country (see the BirdGuides.com map above left, showing birds present in December 2014).

is not a hybrid. Some individuals return each winter to the same site and may be present for many months, so keep a careful eye on BirdGuides.com. ■

• For recent reports of Green-winged Teal in Britain and Ireland, go to www.birdguides.com.

BIRDBUIDES



FIND YOUR OWN

IN England, any large lowland wetland where ducks gather is worth checking, especially lakes and reservoirs in the South-West, East Anglia, Lancashire and Cheshire. In Scotland, lochs in the Outer Hebrides, Shetland and east coast locations are all deserving of a look. The sites below may not all have birds annually, but they do attract them regularly.

England

- **Lancashire:** Martin Mere WWT (SD 427143)
- **Norfolk:** Cley Marshes NWT (TG 053440)
- **Suffolk:** Minsmere RSPB (TM 471672)
- **Cornwall:** Hayle Estuary RSPB (SW 551364)
- **Scilly:** Great Pool, Tresco (SV 891147)

Scotland

- **Orkney:** North Ronaldsay (HY 785560)
- **Aberdeenshire:** Loch of Strathbeg RSPB (NK 055577)
- **Dumfries and Galloway:** Caerlaverock WWT (NY 051656)
- **Argyll:** Loch Gruinart RSPB (NR 275672)



VISIT WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK FOR TIPS ON FINDING MANY MORE TARGET BIRDS

Winter wonderlands

Now that Britain's huge numbers of wintering waterbirds have mostly settled in for the duration, **David Callahan** recommends the best sites to take in the breathtaking spectacles as they flock en masse.



ANDY ROADHOUSE



ARIE OUIWERKERK (WWW.AGAMI.NL)

With the excitement of migration and its attendant movements and chance of rarities now over, it's time for birders to appreciate those birds that have arrived to winter and those that have been left behind. The most dramatic experiences of the season are

with our wintering waterbirds, and Britain is fortunate in having internationally important numbers of many species using its estuaries and wetlands to roost and feed.

Huge flocks of waders and wildfowl use our fecund muds and waters, and so the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) – in collaboration with the RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee – has organised ongoing Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) for the past 34 years. This means that volunteers count all the waterbird species at virtually every pond, lake and estuary in the country. This 'citizen science' project has resulted in a massive amount of scientifically important data, and also highlighted the sites and regions that are most productive for wader and wildfowl species – many of which show up in their thousands.

Here we identify the very best sites – most of which are designated Special Protection Areas by the European Commission – with the most impressive numbers from the most recent published WeBS count summary (using the five-year mean figures for each site). You can appreciate just how important our coasts and marshes are for birds in this harshest of seasons, as well as go out to experience Britain's waterbird wonderland for yourself. Local gen

on where the wader roosts are will help at high tide, but when the tide is out impressive gatherings of geese, ducks and various wader species can all be seen – and the size of many of the flocks means that you won't necessarily need a scope.

1 The Wash, Norfolk/Lincolnshire

This extensive area of tidal mud between Norfolk and Lincolnshire held a five-year mean of 366,094 waterbirds. It is the most important of all British estuaries for wintering species. Among them you can find around 180,000 Knot, 25,000 Oystercatchers, 33,000 Pink-footed Geese, 22,000 Dark-bellied Brent Geese, 16,000 Shelduck, 11,000 Bar-tailed Godwits, 11,000 European Golden Plover, 4,000 Eurasian Curlew and smaller numbers of Northern Pintail, Avocet and Grey Plover, among many others.

2 Ribble and Alt Estuaries, Lancashire/Merseyside

These two adjacent sites hold an average of 285,293 waterbirds between them, including 84,700 Eurasian Wigeon, 18,900 Bar-tailed Godwit, nearly 40,000 Dunlin and 57,800 Knot – it is possibly the best site in Britain for watching wheeling mixed flocks of Knot and Dunlin. Other attractions involve up to 3,500 Northern Pintail and more than 10 per cent of the European wintering Pink-footed Goose population: 23,800 birds or so. More than 4,200 European Golden Plover and 16,000 Oystercatchers are also present, as well as thousands of Common Redshank, Sanderling, Shelduck and Eurasian Teal.

3 Morecambe Bay, Cumbria/Lancashire

Particularly good for waders, the greater Morecambe region held a five-year mean of 210,044 individual birds. Surprisingly, the most numerous wader is Oystercatcher and the site can hold around 40,500 birds, along with 22,600 Knot, 17,000 Dunlin, 12,700 Northern Lapwing, 7,600 Eurasian Wigeon and four figures of Common Redshank, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pink-footed Goose, Shelduck and Eurasian Teal.





ROBIN CHITTENDEN (WWW.ROBINCHITTENDEN.CO.UK)

4 Thames Estuary, Essex/Kent

The shorelines of the Greater Thames hold an average of just over 164,000 waterbirds. If you add the Swale Estuary on to the Thames itself and the Medway and north Kent Marshes, the area contains a serious percentage of Britain's wintering waterbirds, with some even penetrating into London itself in small numbers. This part of the coast has wide expanses of grazing marsh and mud, so expect approximately 9,500 Eurasian Wigeon, up to five figures of Dark-bellied Brent Geese, Eurasian Teal and Oystercatcher, and four figures of Shelduck, Northern Pintail, Avocet, European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing and Knot. The Outer Thames at Medway and Foulness is particularly good, but otherwise birds will be spread across the region. There are still lots of birds to be seen, but there have been substantial declines over the last decade or so. The Swale Estuary, adjacent to the Medway, also holds about 62,500 waterbirds every winter.

5 North Norfolk coast

Birds are more spread out in north Norfolk, and use sites just inland of the coast. A mean of 168,380 birds over the last five WeBS seasons means you can expect to see a good chunk of about 23,800 Pink-footed Geese, which provide a world-famous spectacle as they leave their roosts before dawn. Also present are 11,500 Dark-bellied Brent Geese, 14,000 Eurasian Wigeon and 10,800 Knot, as well as thousands of individuals of a range of other expected species.

6 Humber Estuary, East Yorkshire/Lincolnshire

An average of 126,487 WeBS-countable birds is present on the Humber. The area is particularly good for European Golden Plover (nearly 46,000 can be present), Northern Lapwing (34,000), Knot (26,600) and Dunlin (24,000), with

thousands of individuals of other key wintering species also present.

7 Dee Estuary, Cheshire/Flintshire

A mean of 123,476 waterbirds includes only slightly smaller numbers of Knot and Dunlin, as well as a notable 6,500 Northern Pintail, 28,400 Oystercatchers and four-figure counts of Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Grey Plover, Common Redshank and Shelduck. This is an area well worth visiting, and is perhaps slightly more workable than the adjacent Mersey estuary.

8 Solway Estuary, Cumbria/Dumfries and Galloway

A mean of 116,011 individual waterbirds is present on the Solway each winter. The location of Caerlaverock WWT in the area accounts for the 4,800 or so Barnacle Geese which can be found there. Along with many Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal, around 1,700 Northern Pintail may be seen, as well as 27,000 Oystercatchers and high counts of several other expected species. Good numbers of Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper are spread across the region, though these have declined. Substantial flocks of Common Scoter also winter offshore and there is a good chance of seeing some of these, at least on a fly-past.

9 Somerset Levels, Somerset

Some 100,209 individual birds include 26,700 Eurasian Wigeon, 21,200 Eurasian Teal and 36,500 Northern Lapwing, which qualify the site as a Ramsar wetland. Large numbers of Northern Shoveler are also present, and more than 100 Bewick's Swans also make the levels well worth a visit. The site can act as a cold weather refuge, and 70,000 Northern Lapwing and more than 50,000 Eurasian Wigeon amassed there during the winter of 2012-13.



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

Top left: sunset on the Humber Estuary, which holds the sixth greatest number of waterbirds according to the accumulated data of the British Trust for Ornithology's Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).

Inset left: while not restricted to estuaries and wetlands, significant numbers of European Golden Plover are to be found in such habitats, as they often roost on marshes with species such as Northern Lapwing.

Top: Avocet has staged a rapid comeback over the last 50 years, though flocks are mostly restricted to coastal south-eastern Britain, and 'significant numbers' on estuaries usually means hundreds rather than thousands.

Bottom: Britain's estuaries support many thousands of Eurasian Curlew, which feed on their invertebrate-rich muds and silts, and roost on adjacent marshes, particularly at high tide.

WATERBIRDS



Left: Shelduck can be very sparsely distributed during the breeding season, but wintering flocks can number in their hundreds and some of our estuaries support thousands.

Bottom left: Oystercatchers can be conspicuous by their absence when the tide is out, but frequently form large closely knit high-tide roosts, betraying the large numbers that actually use our tidal wetlands and estuaries.

Right: the Somerset Levels aren't just home to our burgeoning rare breeding heron population, but also provide food and shelter for the ninth-largest concentration of waterbirds in the country in winter.

Bottom right: arguably the greatest spectacle in British birding consists of the large numbers of Pink-footed Geese that winter here, particularly on the eastern side of the country; while they often feed in coastal fields, roosting takes place in the relative safety of inshore waters and saltmarshes.

Map contains
Ordnance Survey data
© Crown copyright
and database 2015

10 Breydon Water and Berney Marshes, Norfolk

With a mean bird count of 92,492, this area is another Eurasian Wigeon-friendly site, with a peak of about 23,000 present most years. The site is also notable for up to 400 Bewick's Swans, 5,800 Pink-footed Geese, more than 10,000 European Golden Plover and a thousand or more Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlin and Northern Lapwing.

11 Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire/Norfolk

As well as supporting 79,588 waterbirds every winter, the Ouse Washes is one of the best sites for Hen Harrier, with up to 12 birds quartering the extensive marshes, and Ruff, 137 of which have been counted in a recent winter. There are 32,100 Eurasian Wigeon. Almost 1,000 Whooper and 6,300 Bewick's Swans use the area, while there are thousands of the commoner wintering ducks and waders, though the species composition is less maritime as this site is inland.

12 Severn Estuary, Gloucestershire/Glamorgan

Among the average 75,295 waterbirds surveyed at this coastal tidal saltmarsh, sand and mud site are some 7,700 Eurasian Wigeon and 280 Bewick's Swans. There is a good chance of a wader spectacle as the tide comes in as up to 45,000 Dunlin winter on these shores, along with good numbers of Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Northern Pintail and Shelduck.

13 Mersey Estuary, Lancashire/Cheshire

With a five-year mean of 71,952 waders and wildfowl, the composition of the avifauna at this estuary is comparable in numbers and species to the Severn Estuary. Some 44,300 Dunlin (3.2 per cent of the Western Palearctic wintering population) use its





mud and silts for feeding and flocking, while 11,700 Eurasian Teal is an exceptional count. European Golden Plover, Common Redshank, Shelduck and Northern Pintail are also relatively numerous.

14 Strangford Lough, Co Down

With 69,967 wintering waterbirds on average, notable among these are almost 900 Bar-tailed Godwits and 6,500 European Golden Plover, along with 8,700 Knot and 10,500 Pale-bellied Brent Geese. There are also good numbers of the commoner waders and wildfowl, including Greylag Goose, Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser.

15 Blackwater Estuary, Essex

The Blackwater holds almost 70,000 waterbirds in winter, and along with the Dengie Flats adjacent to the south, provides a little-visited habitat in Essex for wintering waders and wildfowl. A few Hen Harriers and Ruff use the site, along with up to 80 Avocets, but a visitor's attention will be first drawn by the 7,200-strong European Golden Plover flocks, as well as the wheeling gatherings of Dunlin, which can total 33,300. The Dark-bellied Brent Goose

flocks, numbering up to 15,400 individuals, are also impressive, and there are four-figure counts of Black-tailed Godwit and Grey Plover, as well as about 800 Ringed Plover which can bolster the Dunlin flocks a little. Dengie Flats adds almost 1,200 Bar-tailed Godwits to the tally, as well as 8,400 Knot and a couple of thousand more Grey Plover.

16 Forth Estuary, Fife/Lothian

Around 2,600 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2,900 European Golden Plover, 8,000 Knot and almost 1,300 Turnstone number among the average 69,369 waterbirds surveyed at this coastal site. Offshore, 80 or more Red-throated Divers can be seen, alongside 70 or so Slavonian Grebes and good numbers of Greater Scaup, Common Scoter and Long-tailed Duck. A total of 12,400 Pink-footed Geese on the Forth make up 5.5 per cent of the species' winter population.

17 Montrose Basin, Angus

With 64,000 waterbirds in the area, Montrose Basin is a stronghold for Pink-footed Goose, holding around 31,600 every winter, alongside about 1,000 wild Greylag Geese. Knot number 4,500, while 2,250 Common Redshank is an impressive total, and Dunlin and Oystercatcher also feature. ■

REFERENCES

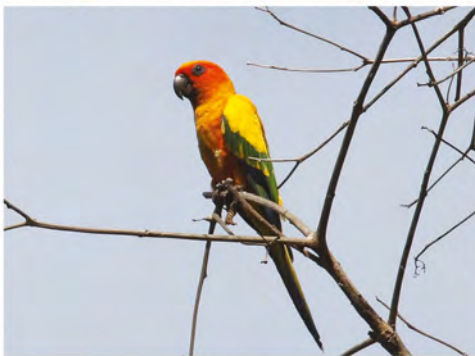
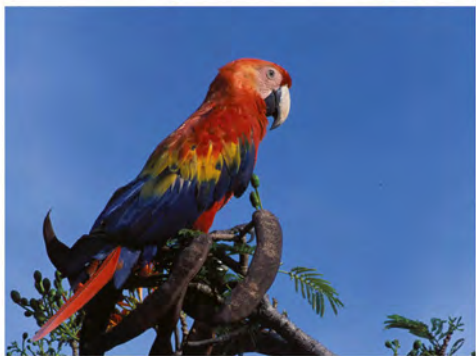
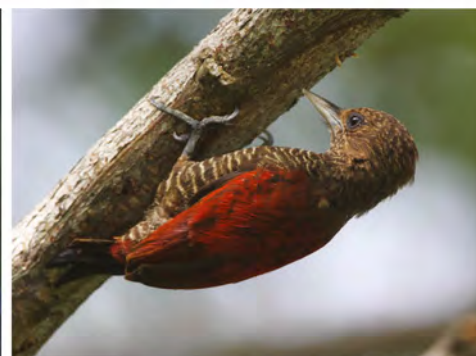
- Holt, C A, Austin, G E, Calbrade, N A, Mellan, H J, Hearn, R D, Stroud, D A, Wotton, S R, and Musgrove, A J. 2015. *Waterbirds in the UK 2013/14: the Wetland Bird Survey*. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford.

CONOR MOLLOY





A Birder's Paradise



With over 878 species of birds, make Guyana your next birding getaway!

GUYANA TOURISM AUTHORITY | National Exhibition Centre, Sophia, Georgetown
Tel: +592 219 0094 - 6 | Fax: +592 219 0093 | E: info@guyana-tourism.com | W: www.guyanabirding.com

Common Pochard, Redhead and Canvasback PHOTO GUIDE

1



1 Adult male Common Pochard (Whitlingham CP, Norwich, Norfolk, 11 February 2012). Although appearing rather drab and non-descript at a distance, this fine portrait of an alert male Common Pochard in full breeding plumage shows what a handsome bird it is. The chestnut head and grey body allow for easy recognition, but the bird's shape – with a long, sloping forehead, a wedge-shaped bill and a rather thick neck – is also distinctive, as too is its deep red eye and pale grey patch towards the tip of the bill. Despite being a fairly common and familiar species in autumn and winter, as a breeding bird it is scarce and localised.

PROFILE



Birdwatch ID Consultant
KEITH VINICOMBE
has written several
books and many
articles and papers on
identification. He is a
past member of the
Rarities Committee.

Common Pochard is a species familiar to all birders, often passing up proper scrutiny owing to its frequency on our ponds, lakes and reservoirs. However, not only is it now declining in numbers, but it is also possible to confuse it with two similar very rare North American ducks, both with a proven vagrancy potential to reach British shores. Keith Vinicombe looks at the subtle and tricky identification criteria of Canvasback and Redhead, to help separate them from the far commoner species and its confusing hybrids.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

As its name suggests, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* is a familiar duck in Britain. Migrants start to arrive in late summer and, during the period 2004-09, around 38,000 were present in winter. It is, however, declining as a non-breeding migrant, with counts in 2013-14 dropping to 16,300, the lowest-ever total. The British wintering population has halved in under 20 years (Holt *et al* 2015). However, 'short-stopping' on the Continent in recent milder winters – a consequence of climate change – may also be a factor, as may ecological problems such as eutrophication.

As a breeding species in Britain it is localised, with just 360 confirmed pairs in 2013 (Holling *et al* 2015). In spring, Common Pochards have a very interesting courtship behaviour. Unlike most ducks, they do not appear to form discrete pairs; instead, they have a kind of lekking system in which many males gang up and pursue just one or two females.

On larger waters, the first returning post-breeding males may appear as early as late May. Many of these also join in with these 'lekking' pursuits, resulting in the bizarre spectacle of large gangs of displaying males pursuing and pestering just two or three females. This behaviour may explain to some extent the significant sexual imbalance outside the breeding season, with males outnumbering females. However, males also tend to winter closer to their breeding areas, with the less dominant females being forced to move further south.

In North America, Common Pochard is replaced by two similar species: Canvasback *A. valisineria* and Redhead *A. americana*. Both have occurred in Britain although, somewhat

surprisingly, they are extremely rare. There have been just seven records of Canvasback, all between 1996 and 2002. Three of them involved one-day birds and three were long-stayers, including a bird that returned to Norfolk and Essex in three winters.

Redhead is rarer still, with just one record. A male turned up at Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, from 8-27 March 1996 and then at Rutland Water, Leicestershire, from 4-24 February 1997.

Given that vagrant Ring-necked Duck *A. collaris* and Lesser Scaup *A. affinis* both increased dramatically once the first birds had been recorded, it is something of a surprise that Redhead and Canvasback have not followed suit. Despite the fact that birders have been on the lookout for them, no more have been found, indicating that both species are genuinely very rare on this side of the Atlantic. It is interesting to note that neither has occurred on the Azores, where both Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup turn up quite regularly, often in multiple arrivals.

Identification

Canvasback and Redhead are similar to Common Pochard, with the sexes having a similar sequence of plumages, but the two American species are structurally very different. Canvasback is similar to Common Pochard but is noticeably larger, longer necked and longer billed, these last two features combining with a long sloping forehead to produce a strikingly elongated head profile. The bill appears narrower and less spatulate.

Although similar to Common Pochard and Canvasback in plumage, Redhead is obviously different in shape, having a rounded head with a steep forehead, a rather spatulate bill and a

stocky body. This combination is somewhat reminiscent of Greater Scaup *A. marila*.

The biggest problem in the identification of Redhead and Canvasback is not their separation from Common Pochard, but distinguishing them from hybrids that superficially resemble them. In Britain, this problem has occurred on a number of occasions and it relates to three specific hybrids.

The first are hybrids between Common Pochard and Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, examples of which are surprisingly frequent. Many such birds resemble pure Ferruginous Ducks, but at the other end of the spectrum, some resemble Common Pochards and a few have shown a superficial resemblance to Redhead.

However, such birds usually show clear indications of their Ferruginous ancestry, such as a domed head with a central peak and a strong maroon tint to the breast. The upperparts, too, tend to be very dark, another character inherited from the blacker-backed Ferruginous Duck.

The bill may appear intermediate, but one such hybrid showed a black bill tip strongly curved on its inner edge, unlike the squared-off, 'dipped-in-ink' bill tip of Redhead. Common Pochard x Ferruginous hybrids are also likely to show distinct whitening in the wing-stripe, another Ferruginous feature that Redhead would never show. They also tend to be smaller and more compact than Common Pochard.

A more troublesome hybrid is Common Pochard x Canvasback. One returning bird at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, from 1993 to 2003 was very similar to Canvasback except that it was slightly darker, lacked a black forehead and showed a small but distinct

narrow white subterminal band across the bill tip.

It turned out to be a known Common Pochard x Canvasback hybrid, one of its parents being a pinioned Canvasback that had been released onto Roath Park Lake in Cardiff (Vinicombe 2003). When researching that particular bird, it was discovered that some of the Canvasbacks in the collection at Slimbridge also had small white subterminal bill bands, but birds studied there recently failed to show this feature.

A third problematic hybrid was a 'Redhead' that was discovered on Kenfig Pool, Mid Glamorgan, in November 2001. That individual wintered in the area until 2004; it was originally accepted by the Rarities Committee but then rejected following a review. This subtle bird was, essentially, a Redhead – even its display calls were spot on for that species – but what really let it down was its consistently domed head shape. What may well have been the same bird was also seen across the Severn Estuary at Chew Valley Lake in November 2006. Although a 90 per cent Redhead, unfortunately it seems that it had some Common Pochard genes in its ancestry. ■

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Rupert Higgins for his help with additional information.

REFERENCES

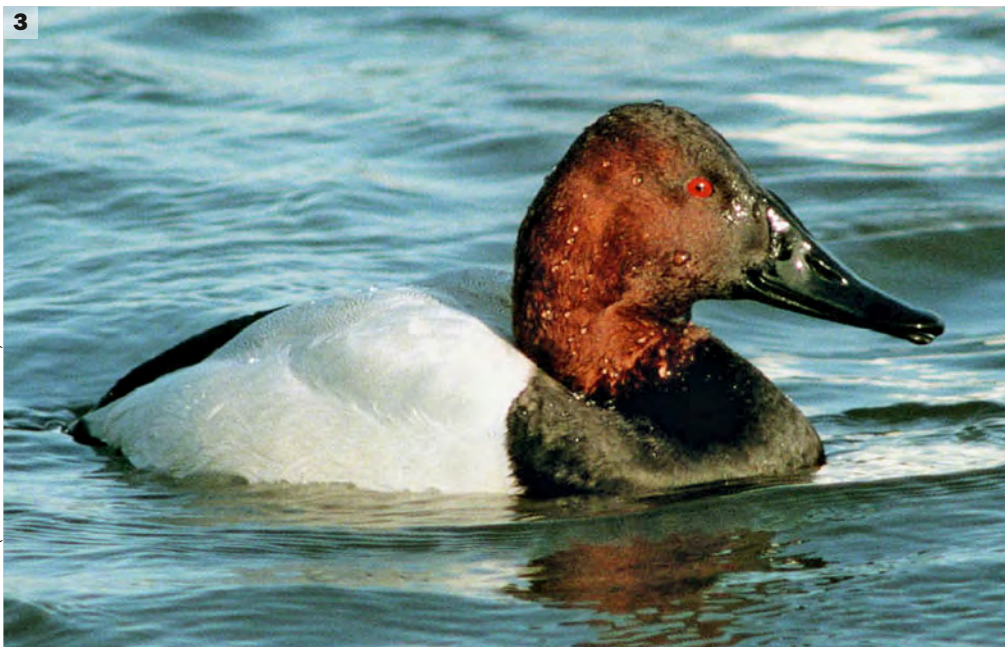
- Holling, M, and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. 2015. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: 373-422.
- Holt, C A, Austin, G E, Calbrade, N A, Mellan, H J, Hearn, R D, Stroud, D A, Wotton, S R, and Musgrove, A J. 2015. *Waterbirds in the UK 2013/15: the Wetland Bird Survey*. BTO, RSPB and JNCC, in association with WWT. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford.
- Vinicombe, K. 2003. The identification of a hybrid Canvasback x Common Pochard: implications for the identification of vagrant Canvasbacks. *British Birds* 96: 112-118.

2



2 Adult male Common Pochard (Seaforth, Lancashire, 1 November 2005). When relaxed, the domed chestnut head is sunk into the shoulders, with the steep forehead merging into a deep-based bill, which has a distinct curvature to the upper mandible. The body itself is quite a dark shade of grey, with the feathers being finely and delicately vermiculated. As well as the red eye, the large, rather U-shaped whitish-grey patch on the upper mandible is also distinctive. In flight it has a pale grey wing-stripe. Unlike Tufted Duck *A fuligula*, with which it commonly associates, Common Pochard is principally vegetarian.

3



3 Adult male Canvasback (Welney, Norfolk, 6 February 1998). The basic similarity between this male Canvasback and the Common Pochard above is obvious – note in particular that both species have a deep red eye. However, Canvasback is distinctly larger and bulkier, with a more sharply peaked head and a long, drawn-out head and bill profile. The bill itself tapers to a longer and finer tip than that of Common Pochard. Most obviously, it is completely black in colour. Also distinctive is its much paler body plumage, but in addition note that the crown, forehead and lores are distinctly blackish in tone.

4



4 Adult male Redhead (Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 8 February 2013). This captive male is in fresh plumage. It does not have Common Pochard's wedged-shaped bill and head profile; instead the shallow-based bill protrudes from a near-vertical forehead. It also has a very rounded crown, nape and hind-neck, producing an overall impression that is reminiscent of Greater Scaup. The bill colour and pattern also differ from Common Pochard: a large, black 'dipped-in-ink' tip and a pale blue base, with an ill-defined narrow white subterminal band behind the tip. Note also its orangey-yellow eye. The body plumage is a much darker grey than that of drake Common Pochard.

5



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

5 Eclipse male Common Pochard (Seaforth, Lancashire, 23 August 2013). This male Common Pochard is in eclipse plumage, which is seen in late summer. In basic pattern and colour, this is similar to full plumage, but it is much duller and 'messier' looking, lacking both the brightness and the strong contrasts of full plumage. If in doubt, males at this time can be easily sexed as they retain their red eye throughout eclipse but, to all intents and purposes, they lose the large whitish patch behind the bill tip.

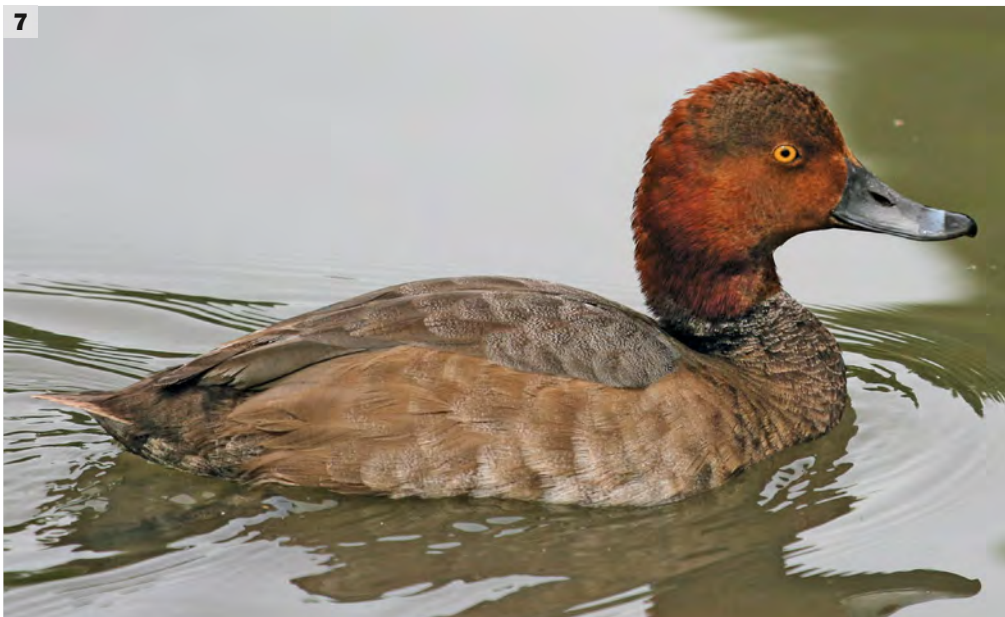
6



DAVE KEY

6 Eclipse male Canvasback (Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 22 July 2014). Eclipse Canvasbacks are also much duller than in full plumage, this captive bird showing brown fringing to its breast feathers and brown feathering in its flanks and scapulars. Unlike Common Pochard, however, eclipse male Canvasbacks are much more like their respective females, acquiring a paler buffy-brown head with a subdued eyering and a 'tear line' behind the eye. However, like eclipse male Common Pochards, they retain a red eye, so any red-eyed female-type 'pochard' in late summer would be worth a second look. At this time, the pale body, larger size and structural differences should also attract attention.

7



DAVE KEY

7 Eclipse male Redhead (Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 26 July 2013). Male Redheads in eclipse, like this captive bird, become much more female-like than either Common Pochard or Canvasback. Although they retain their reddish-brown head, it is duller and suffused with black, particularly on the crown. The breast is subdued by buff feather fringing and the body, too, becomes very brown – darker above – with delicately mottled pale grey feather fringes. The bill pattern is heavily subdued, with only a faint greyish band behind the large black tip. The eye remains orangey-yellow and is thus more obvious than the red eyes of eclipse drake Common Pochard and Canvasback.

8



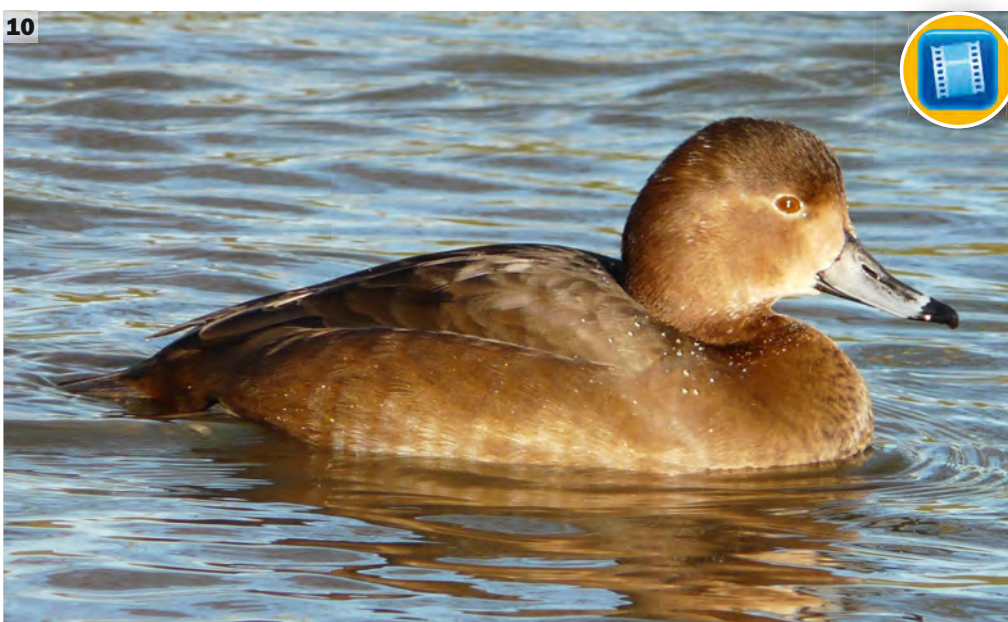
8 Female Common Pochard (Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 6 March 2007). Female Common Pochards in non-breeding plumage resemble males in that they have pale grey flanks and upperparts, but the breast is a duller blackish-brown and the head is also brown with a whitish eyering and 'tear line' behind the eye, as well as a whitish chin and throat. This plumage is lost during a spring body moult, summer female Common Pochards then becoming uniformly dark brown, with only a faint pale eyering, a buffish throat and variable subdued faint whitish-buff fringing to the scapular and flank feathers. In winter, females show a large whitish patch behind the bill tip but, in breeding condition, the bill becomes completely blackish.

9



9 Female Canvasback (California, USA, 1 February 2015). Female Canvasbacks in winter are similar to female Common Pochard in basic pattern, but their plumage is paler, with a gingery-brown head with a whitish eyering, a buffish 'tear line' and obviously paler whitish-grey flanks and upperparts. Some are distinctly paler than others, with extensive swathes of whitish on the head and foreneck. At this time of year their larger size, bulkier body, longer neck and long 'stretched-out' bill and head profile are fundamental to their identification. Unlike Common Pochard, the bill remains completely black at all times. Like Common Pochard, females acquire a uniformly rich brown summer plumage.

10



10 Female Redhead (Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 10 December 2012). As this captive bird shows, female Redhead differs from the other two species in that its body does not turn grey in winter – it has a uniformly rich brown body throughout the year. In fresh plumage, it has buff lores and throat, a whitish eyering and a short buff 'tear line' behind the eye. The bill is similar to the male's, with a 'dipped-in-ink' black tip and a pale grey base, with a variable amount of blackish mottling in the centre of the upper mandible. Its general appearance, shape and structure – steep forehead, rounded head and stocky body – may bring to mind a juvenile Greater Scaup.

11



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

11 First-winter Common Pochard (Seaforth, Lancashire, 4 September 1999). Like summer-plumaged females, juvenile Common Pochards are uniformly brown, but are much fresher looking. However, in August-September, juvenile males moult into a 'first-winter' plumage which mirrors that of the adult male except that it is duller and much more subdued. They then show a dull chestnut head with a very dull red eye and a dull grey bill with a subdued pattern. Both the breast and the belly are blackish, but this colour is variably obscured by thick buffy feather fringes. As the brown juvenile body plumage is replaced, the upperparts and flanks gradually become greyer. This plumage is not well known because it does not last long, the birds becoming much more adult-like by late autumn.

12



ALAN TATE

12 Ferruginous Duck x Common Pochard hybrid (Kenfig Pool, Mid Glamorgan, 18 October 2004). With its dark grey upperparts and flanks this moulting bird superficially resembles a Redhead, but there are a number of features that are incompatible with that species: a highly domed head, a piercing yellow eye, a curved Common Pochard-like upper mandible, a curved rear edge to the black bill tip and a chestnut breast. In combination, all these features indicate that it is a Pochard x Ferruginous Duck hybrid, examples of which are surprisingly frequent. The white patch on the sides of the undertail coverts would also support this identification (if the tail were raised, the entire undertail coverts would no doubt appear white).

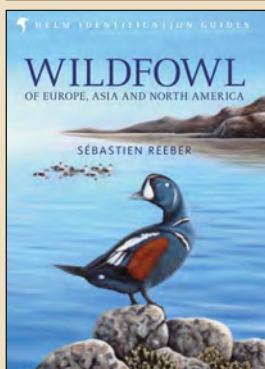
13



R M ANDREWS

13 Canvasback x Common Pochard (Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, 31 December 2002). This notorious bird closely resembled a Canvasback, but the body wasn't quite pale enough, the forehead and fore-crown not quite black enough and the bill not quite long enough. In addition, it consistently showed small white markings behind the bill tip, while the line of demarcation between the black breast and pale grey fore-flanks was vertical, rather than sloping. All these features suggested that it was not a pure bird, a view that was eventually confirmed when it came to light that a wild Common Pochard had paired with a captive female Canvasback just across the Severn Estuary, at Roath Park Lake in Cardiff.

FURTHER READING



Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America by Sébastien Reeber (Christopher Helm)
This new reference guide features current knowledge on the identification of ducks, geese and swans in Europe, Asia and North America, including the three species covered in this photo guide. The book provides an unrivalled level of detail and a wealth of information essential for anyone interested in this fascinating group of birds.
■ Buy from just £30.99; SRP £35.

To order see page 63, call 01778 392027 or visit the Birdwatch Bookshop at www.birdwatch.co.uk/store.

Find your own

COMMON Pochard is a near-ubiquitous inhabitant of most of Britain's open water habitats, and as such is likely to grace even the most lowly of local patches with its presence on occasion. It prefers lakes and ponds with a dense underwater flora, and still builds up substantially in numbers during autumn despite its documented decline.

The two similar American species, however, are an entirely

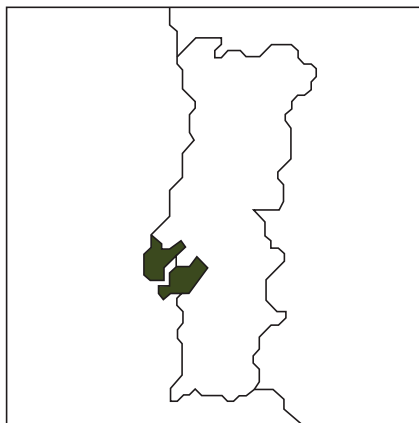
different proposition. **Redhead** – with only one accepted record in Britain, from the East Midlands – has yet to establish an occurrence pattern.

Canvasback, with seven British records, has occurred mostly on the east coast, bar one each on Orkney and in Cornwall.

Despite this, the most likely places to find these extremely rare species must be the west coast and Northern Isles. Good luck! ■



Come meet some of the most extraordinary inhabitants in the Lisbon region!



Discover what birdwatching in the Lisbon region has to offer! With natural environments that include mountains, the Atlantic coast, rivers, estuaries and protected nature reserves, you will have the opportunity to see a large variety of different bird species in a relatively small geographical area.

As the region boasts a mild climate year round and is visited by many migratory birds, a variety of observation and photography programmes allow you, within a short period, to catch sight of lots of different species, many of which are rare in Portugal and other European countries.

www.birds.pt • www.evoa.pt

www.visitlisboa.com



TURISMO DE
PORTUGAL



lisboa



Q= Should we still 'collect' specimens for science?

The 'collection' of a rare male Guadalcanal Moustached Kingfisher in September sparked some passionate online debate about the ethics of killing birds to store in museum archives. We asked two scientists to offer their opinions.



Professor Martin Collinson is a senior lecturer in biomedical sciences at the University of Aberdeen. He argues that even the best modern technology is no substitute for a specimen.

No one likes hurting animals and no responsible scientist would adversely affect the conservation status of the species he or she is studying. However, the argument that technology has moved on to the extent that continued collection of important specimens is obsolete is based on ignorance and a misunderstanding of what museums are for and why they matter.

We all understand the importance of museum collections for bird identification. Pretty much all our field guides are based on them, and no amount of field study or photography

can replace the value of museums for direct side-by-side comparison of different age, seasonal and sex classes of birds. Most people will also understand the role that museum specimens have played in piecing together the distributions and habitat requirements of endangered tropical birds, and hence the role they have played in their conservation.

We now take for granted forensic techniques such as DNA sequencing, stable isotope analysis and toxicological studies that use museum specimens to further our understanding of bird taxonomy,

migration, ecology and environmental threat. Yet in the so-called 'golden age' of collecting in the later 1800s and early 1900s, when governmental and private explorers travelled the world killing birds to build up the scientific collections we use today, the collectors themselves could have had no concept that these new technologies would be developed, and that therefore the scientific value of the specimens would increase over time.

If an important bird is netted today, we can take photographs, measurements, a few feathers and a blood sample, and satisfy our



Professor Ben A Minter of Arizona State University explores the intersection of environmental ethics, ecology and conservation. He believes that specimen collection should be avoided in some cases.

There's an old Gary Larson *The Far Side* cartoon that depicts two bespectacled and pith-helmeted lepidopterists in the field, brandishing their nets. One of them holds a large, charismatic-looking butterfly gingerly by the wing. "An excellent specimen," he declares to his compatriot, "... the symbol of beauty, innocence and fragile life ..." He then delivers the zinger: "Hand me the jar of ether."

The joke lands because of the apparent incongruity of the scene: an appreciation of natural beauty and frailty followed by the abrupt decision to collect (kill) the organism in the name of science. Yet specimen collection, as cartoonist Larson obviously knows, is deeply engrained in the culture and methodology of field biology. In fact, specimens have long been considered the 'gold standard' for identifying and documenting a new or rediscovered species.

It therefore wasn't a big surprise



The bird that started the debate. This is the first-ever photograph of a male Guadalcanal Moustached Kingfisher, a species which hadn't been seen in the wild for more than 60 years. This bird was subsequently 'collected'.



ROB MOYLE

immediate requirements. But who is to say what technology will be developed in 30, 100 or even 200 years' time that will allow us to extract new biological information from specimens, providing that they exist?

Who curates photographs and blood samples? Currently no one, and they could be lost to future investigators. Museums curate scientific information, and for all the advances in technology, the unit of curation remains, for now at least, the specimen, available to all researchers forever.

Furthermore, the argument that photographs and feathers can replace a specimen is fatuous. Skeletal preparations, fat, muscle and stomach samples, and sampling of internal and external parasites, all provide information about taxonomy and ecology, what a bird eats, how healthy it is, and the environmental stresses and pollutants it is exposed to. These things may change over time, with habitat degradation, or seasonally, and are essential to our understanding of the conservation status of a species, especially poorly known species that



NATURALIS BIODIVERSITY CENTER (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

Guam Kingfisher is extinct in the wild, while fewer than 100 individuals exist in captivity. Skins like this one at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, The Netherlands, mean that researchers can continue to study the species even if it becomes permanently lost.

may be subject to climate change.

We should be using modern technologies to increase the usefulness and value of museum specimens, and entrench museums at the heart of conservation effort. We should not use modern technologies as an excuse to marginalise ongoing museum collections and prevent the collection of essential information from important bird populations.

The Guadalcanal Moustached Kingfisher is not currently endangered, but it will be: logging and climate change are in the post, and when they hit we will need all the information we can get about the species, and that will include a small number of specimens of all age and sex classes. All that has happened here is that a scientist has, at the culmination of a long and pioneering study, found a bird unrepresented in the world's museums, made an assessment of its population and realised that the bird was worth more dead than alive, both to us and to its own species. The demonisation of him and his team for doing this useful work is both unfair and distasteful. We need to be less squeamish. ■

that when researchers from the American Museum of Natural History encountered a Guadalcanal Moustached Kingfisher recently during a field survey in the Solomon Islands (bit.ly/bw282Kingfisher), they collected a specimen of this largely undocumented species after capturing and photographing it. Although the IUCN currently lists the bird as Endangered, the biologist who collected the bird believes it to be abundant on the island (based on his interpretation of local tribal accounts of the bird). Collecting a single specimen, he argues, didn't impact the bird's conservation status. Furthermore, we're assured that the procurement of a voucher specimen will yield great benefits to science and conservation efforts, now and in the future (bit.ly/bw282WhyICollected).

But should collection always be the default approach when encountering a new, rare or rediscovered species, particularly when there is – as in the case of the kingfisher – uncertainty surrounding its population size and reason to believe it may be small? In a controversial and much-discussed paper published last year in *Science* (Minteer *et al* 2014), my co-authors and I argued

against the “collect first and always” norm in field biology. We raised the concern that traditions in biology and taxonomy encouraging the collection of voucher specimens to confirm a species' existence could magnify and combine with other forms of extinction risk in the case of small populations of rare and vulnerable species.

The response to our paper was overwhelmingly negative (and in some cases quite hostile). More than 120 academic and museum scientists on six continents submitted a forceful letter to *Science* vociferously defending the necessity of the voucher specimen in taxonomic description and in all areas of biological and conservation science.

Our paper makes it quite clear, however, that we aren't on a mission to halt responsible scientific specimen collection. We argue instead for avoiding collecting from small, fragmented and vulnerable populations, and we promote the use of alternative identification techniques that don't involve taking a specimen from the field in order to describe it. The alternatives include the use of high-resolution photography (available on most smartphones), audio recording (if the organism has a call)

and non-invasive DNA sampling (via a feather sample, skin swab and so on). When combined together, we believe these techniques can provide an effective and less biologically risky method for identifying new or rediscovered species.

The kingfisher case suggests that old practices die hard. Yet the winds of change may be starting to blow. A recent paper published in the taxonomic journal *ZooKeys* describing a new and rare fly species (*Marleyimyia xylocopae*) relied on photographic documentation only (Marshall and Evenhuis 2015). Although the authors make it clear that specimen collection is still for them the preferred method of species identification and description, they also conclude “it is indeed no longer required”.

In other words, no more ether jar. ■

REFERENCES

- Minteer, B A, Collins, J P, Love, K E, and Puschendorf, R. 2014. Avoiding (Re)extinction. *Science* 344: 260-261. DOI: 10.1126/science.1250953.
- Marshall, S A, and Evenhuis, N L. 2015. New species without dead bodies: a case for photo-based descriptions, illustrated by a striking new species of *Marleyimyia* Hesse (Diptera, Bombyliidae) from South Africa. *ZooKeys* 525: 117-127. DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.525.6143.

TrailSeeker Binoculars



TrailSeeker
8 x 42

available at
 **wex**
photographic
warehouse express

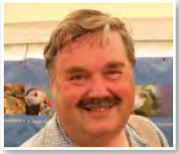
Compact, robust and fine-tuned for perfect performance



TrailSeeker
8 x 32

TrailSeeker binoculars provide high level outdoor performance, making them perfect for the avid bird-watcher or hill walker. The TrailSeeker is a feature-rich binocular with superb optical quality at an affordable price. Precise yet robust, the magnesium alloy frame is light and durable and with a fully waterproof body it's ideal for use in any weather condition. Phase and dielectric coated BaK-4 prisms dramatically increase light transmission for unrivalled image quality and viewing clarity. Compared with other binoculars in its price range, TrailSeeker offers better close focus combined with a wider field of view.

For more information, please visit www.celestron.com



MARK AVERY

Trust in nature

The National Trust owns huge tracts of land across Britain, but its record on protecting the wildlife on that land is somewhat lacking, says **Mark Avery**.

The National Trust is a large and powerful organisation, with land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (The National Trust for Scotland is a separate body) and with a membership of more than 4 million. It's a hybrid beast, owning the childhood homes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, but also Corfe Castle, large swathes of upland Britain and long stretches of coastline.

I'm a member of the National Trust (in as much as the money comes out of a joint bank account, but my name is not on the membership card), so I see all the information the organisation sends out. Despite the fact that the National Trust is a huge landowner, it is very coy on its website about what it does for nature. When I looked in mid-October, all the information was harking back to butterflies and the summer months. It doesn't give a very dynamic impression of the relationship between the charity and wildlife.

The National Trust does do a good job for wildlife – if you judge it as a landowner. And it certainly is a landowner, with 255,000 ha of land (about twice that of the RSPB, although more than half of the RSPB's land is in Scotland) and, just as an example, the largest single landholding in the Peak District – with 12 per cent of the National Park. If you were to judge the National Trust as a conservation body, however, then it falls far short of the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts in attention to nature and knowledge of its wildlife assets.

Many of us might wish that the organisation would do more for wildlife. That may be a bit much to expect given the National Trust's reputation as being run by land agents, but I would say that over the last couple of decades it has been even quieter than it used to be. It is less likely to join in with other (should we even say 'other'?) wildlife organisations these days and it rests rather on its laurels, or oak leaves.

Must do better

I'd like to see the National Trust pay more attention to:

- Producing and publishing annual accounts



On its website, the UK's biggest landowner claims to "look after a lot of nature and wildlife", but it should do more – much more.

“The National Trust does do a good job for wildlife – if you judge it as a landowner”

of wildlife populations on its land.

- Committing to do more (much more!) to protect farmland birds than the countryside as a whole.
- Ceasing all shooting lets on its land in National Parks and AONBs.
- Switching to the use of non-toxic ammunition for sport shooting and wildlife management on its land.
- Publicising its good work for wildlife.

Even though we may never see the National Trust in a leadership role in campaigning, it could be doing far more – even though it does much at the moment – to demonstrate to other landowners the way ahead. ■

Do this in December

If you are a member of the National Trust, write to the organisation to ask it to do more for nature. And ask a few pointed questions about the aspects of nature that you care most about, see what sort of answer you receive and let us know at letters@birdwatch.co.uk.



Birdwatch Artist of the Year 2015

This year **David Callahan** made his debut on the judging panel and with the four other judges had to perform the near-impossible task of choosing the best work created in wildlife art over the last year. After much deliberation, a clear winner emerged.

Having attended the Birdwatch Artist of the Year awards many times in the past, I knew that the task of acting as one of the judges this year was inevitably going to involve some difficult decisions, particularly as such a high standard of work is admitted by the Society of Wildlife Artists (SWLA) for their annual exhibition entitled *The Natural Eye* – the event to which all the entries are submitted.

Meeting up with the other judges – SWLA Vice-presidents Andrew Stock and Bruce Pearson, SWLA Secretary Chris Rose and award sponsor Peter Antoniou from Swarovski Optik – on a crisp Wednesday morning put me at ease. A thorough viewing of the entries by each judge individually was enough for all to nominate several favourites, and eventually a near-unanimous number one was identified, as well as many (perhaps too many) runners-up.

Visitors to the exhibition itself would also have been treated to excerpts from several artists' sketchbooks and field impressions from a group who went to Wallasea Island RSPB to cover the birds and building works before the seawall was breached to flood the reserve's new saltmarshes, created with spoil from London's Crossrail project (see *Birdwatch* 277: 64-66). These fascinating works in progress were not included in the voting, but provided an insight into many of the artists' methods, as most had finished paintings included in *The Natural Eye*.

The awards were presented by nature writer Simon Barnes, after being introduced by SWLA President and gifted sculptor Harriet Mead. Simon underscored the idea that all the artists were representing the birds and wildlife that we stand to lose – that we are in fact losing constantly – as the process of the sixth Great Extinction continues, but lightened the tone by saying that the works were created with an intense



Winner: ***Fishing Frenzy*** **by Jane Smith**

The winning artist's entry was chosen by the judging panel as exemplifying the many facets that can be found in the best bird art. While not intended as a life-like representation of fishing Northern Gannets, Jane has captured the jizz of the species perfectly as the four adult birds dive into the waves, while summoning a visually pleasing, simplified graphic representation of the dynamic scene, full of action and speed.

Fishing Frenzy was inspired by intimate views of diving gannets seen from a small rowing boat in the Sound of Jura, as both artist and birds fished for mackerel in the sheltered waters there. Jane is a former wildlife filmmaker, now settled on the west coast of Scotland, where she spends as much time painting wildlife as possible.





***Dead Partridge* by Ben Woodhams**

Painting birds from fresh corpses and museum specimens is a traditional method of maintaining accuracy in illustration, and Ben Woodhams's detailed and sensitive watercolour execution of Grey Partridge is a skilful example of the painstaking patience needed to illustrate a cryptically plumaged bird's detail and form. Each feather is rendered with life-like precision, while the arrangement of the bird's parts with colour test strips emphasises the technical expertise required for this discipline. However, should this seem too cold and clinical, the ghost images of the bird appended to its wings add an emotional subtlety not usually found in such 'field guide-friendly' paintings. *Dead Partridge* was one of three such paintings entered by Ben, but was chosen by the judges as the most striking and naturalistic (though all three met very high standards). Ben lives on the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea, where he often works from bird corpses, as well as live wild birds and the coastal weather and landscape.



***Sandwich Terns, Porth Neigwl* by Kim Atkinson**

This subtly abstract representation of adult and juvenile Sandwich Terns impressed the judges in a similar vein to the winning entry by Jane Smith, in that it shows the jizz of the birds in a fully realised manner, while incorporating a simplified abstract feel in order to give a visually pleasing design balance. The pastel shades are almost reminiscent of a New Naturalist book cover illustration, yet the artist's individual style shines through. Kim lives and works near Aberdaron, Wales, on the Llyn Peninsula, but has travelled the globe on artists' conservation residencies.



***Palm Warbler in Goldenrod* by Barry van Dusen**

This fine watercolour rendition of one of the more obscure bright-plumaged American wood-warblers was one of several impressionistic but ornithologically accurate watercolours entered by Barry van Dusen. The red and yellow tones of the bird are really brought out by the greens and yellows echoed in the underlying vegetation, resulting in a painting full of energy and life. Barry lives in central Massachusetts, USA, where he specialises in transparent watercolour portraits – letting the paper provide the colour white – of local American bird species in their natural habitats. He exhibits on both sides of the Atlantic, and like many SWLA artists, has travelled the world, painting to raise money for the conservation of threatened ecosystems.



Norfolk Coast and Great Grey Shrike by Daniel Cole

Daniel is based in Truro, Cornwall, where he specialises in abstractions of form and colour in nature. The compact, aggressive character of the shrike is here accentuated by the angular and muscular way in which it is drawn, while not losing the essence of the species. The habitat and land are not so accurately rendered, but this serves to focus the raw presence of the bird and imply overwhelming, almost hallucinogenic, hues in the natural background. While usually illustrating the Cornish landscape, Daniel has also been on many field trips around the world.

love and that it is this that may yet turn around that cruel process.

With this grave warning and brave realisation still resonating in our thoughts, the first prize was then awarded to the freshly chosen winner,

Jane Smith, for her deceptively simple rendition of Northern Gannets diving, entitled *Fishing Frenzy*.

We're happy to present the winning painting here, along with several of the nominated and commended artworks,

but there were also many others which could have been chosen as both contenders and to illustrate the many highlights of this year's exhibition in *Birdwatch* – the standard and quality were that high this year. ■



Lapwings and Seablite by Robert Greenhalf

Woodcuts hold a special place in the hearts of aficionados of wildlife art, and one of the finest practitioners of this form is Robert Greenhalf. He is also perhaps a purist when it comes to drawing his subjects from life in the field, which goes some way to explaining how he is able to produce such 'jizzy' images from the most basic of lines and blocks of colour. Robert also uses watercolours, oils and drypoint printmaking, and in the case of these lapwings, he hand-coloured the initial black-and-white woodcut to produce a deceptively simple illustration full of character and life.



Smew Parade by John Hatton

John Hatton works in a variety of styles and media, mostly concentrating on waterbirds in his wildlife art. This strikingly monochrome representation of adult drake smew maintains a good balance between its 'parading' subjects and the surrounding water, retaining their natural individuality while paring them down to their shared being. Smew is an ideal choice for this kind of graphically balanced mix of grey, black and white, and John has created a finely judged clean evocation of a wild duck species many birders are keen to see come winter. John's linocuts like this are also supplemented by his pencil sketches and watercolours – often of waterbirds but also of landscapes and plants, and traditional still life works.

BIRD FAMILIES OF THE WORLD

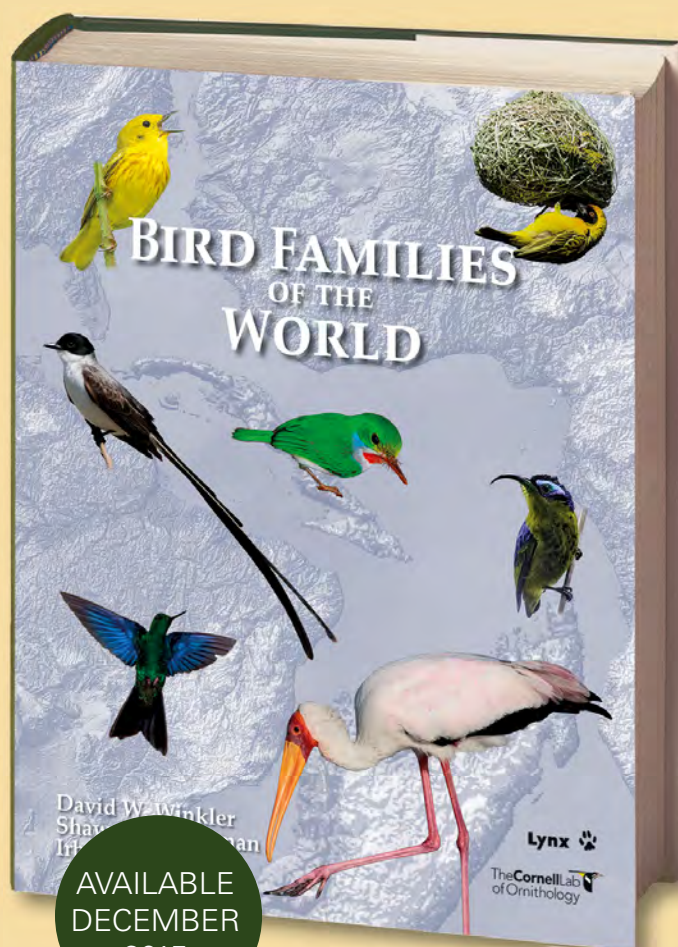
AN INVITATION TO THE SPECTACULAR DIVERSITY OF BIRDS

By *David W. Winkler, Shawn M. Billerman and Irby J. Lovette*

Co-published by **Lynx Edicions** and **The Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

SPECIAL OFFER FOR BIRDWATCH READERS UNTIL JANUARY 31ST

70 € (regular price 87 €) AND **FREE SHIPPING!**



AVAILABLE
DECEMBER
2015



Genetic analyses have resulted in robust re-definition and re-sequencing of orders and families. This new view of birds and their relationships is summarised here, in what is designed to be simply the best single-volume entry to avian diversity available, and to provide a mental map to help you organise your experiences and observations.

-
- 243 distribution maps, c. 750 colour photos,
- 2,336 bird figures (all genera illustrated),
- 31 x 24 cm, c. 600 pages

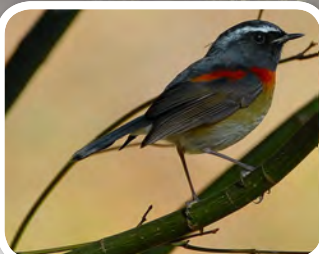
Order online at www.lynxeds.com (enter the promo code: **BFWBW**)

Discover Asia's best kept secret **Taiwan**

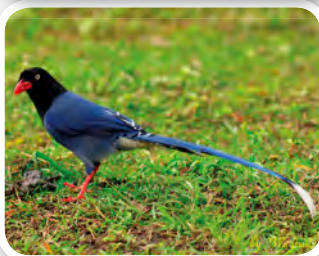
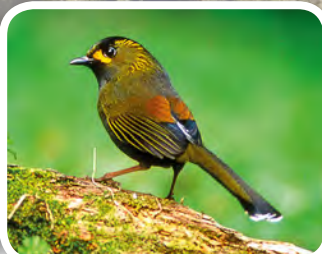
THE HEART OF ASIA



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

VARIATIONS in geology, weather and elevation have blessed Taiwan with an extraordinary abundance of flora and fauna, including many endemic species that are found nowhere else. There are **27 species** of endemic birds,

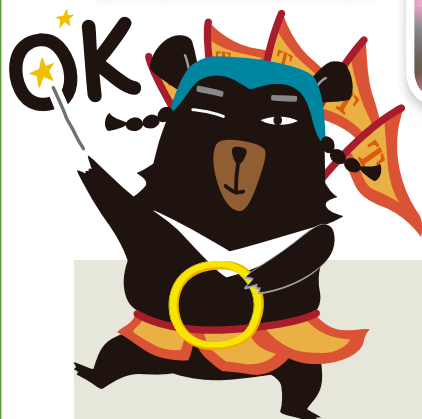
including the spectacular **Taiwan Blue Magpie**, **Mikado Pheasant**, **Collared Bush-Robin**, **Formosan Yuhina** and **Steere's Liocichla**.

Taiwan also plays winter host to around half the world population of the globally threatened **Black-faced Spoonbill**.

A modern infrastructure, superb cuisine, friendly people and a rich cultural heritage make Taiwan a wonderful place to visit.

Visit our facebook page and website:

eng.taiwan.net.tw



Taiwan



(some of them seasonal) are Malayan Night Heron, Chinese Egret, Saunders's Gull, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Fairy Pitta, Island Thrush and Golden Parrotbill.

Top locations

Taipei area Taiwan's capital city has plenty of good birding sites, including the Taipei Botanic Gardens where Malayan Night Heron is possible, Taipei City Waterbird Refuge for numerous wildfowl, herons and other species, including the chance of Baikal Teal and Chinese Egret, and within easy reach nearby, Tangmingshan National Park, where the endemic Taiwan Blue Magpie and Taiwan Whistling Thrush are among the exciting possibilities.

Hohuanshan High in the mountainous centre of Taiwan, this productive area has White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Taiwan Bush Warbler, Flamecrest and Taiwan Rosefinch, alongside other desirable species such as Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler and Golden Parrotbill.

Tseng Wen Chi Located in Tainan county in the south-west, this estuary is best for the wintering flock of Black-faced Spoonbills, though the species has also been recorded at the Tatu Estuary.

Wushe Like Hsitou to the south, this town is close to some of the best forest birding in the north-central mountains, where all but two of Taiwan's endemic birds (Taiwan Blue Magpie and Styan's Bulbul) occur. Particularly worth searching out here are Swinhoe's and Mikado Pheasants, Taiwan Partridge, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina and Yellow Tit. ■

TAIWAN

Getting there

- There are frequent flights from London and other European airports to Taipei.
- Taiwan has a good public transport network, but a hire car is most practical for birding.

Contacts

- Taiwan Tourism Bureau: www.taiwan.net.tw.

Further reading and resources

- *A Field Guide to the Birds of China* by John Mackinnon and Karen Phillipps (Oxford University Press, £41.99) – order from £36.99 from the Birdwatch Bookshop (bit.ly/bw282BirdsOfChina).
- Oriental Bird Club: www.orientalbirdclub.org/taiwan.

ROBERT TDC (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

CHARLES LAM (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

Taiwan is a hot-spot for endemism, with up to 27 unique bird species including Yellow Tit (main photo) and Taiwan Barwing (inset).

HOT-SPOT Rich in endemic birds, spectacular scenery and cultural heritage, the island of Taiwan has a unique appeal for visiting birders.

There is no place quite like Taiwan. Lying just over 100 miles off the coast of south-east China, where the Palearctic and Oriental regions meet, the island is isolated enough to have developed an avifauna truly of its own. Smaller in area than Switzerland, it boasts vast tracts of undisturbed and bird-rich habitats with a unique range of species, making it an essential destination for the discerning world birder.

Habitats and climate

Two-thirds of Taiwan is rugged, mountainous terrain, running in five ranges from north to south, and forest cover remains extensive at about 60 per cent. In contrast, the western third of the island is distinctly flatter, mainly agricultural and home to most of the human population.

The varied topography impacts on the climate, which ranges broadly from subtropical in the south to tropical in the centre and north, and temperate in the mountains. A rainy season in May and June is followed by a hot, humid summer with the chance of typhoons, then a long winter period from November through to March, when there is rain in the north-east but much of the island is sunny – the ideal time for a birding trip.

Birds

Taiwan has a very rich avifauna, some 639 species having been recorded in total. Of these, 27 (according to IOC taxonomy) are endemic to the island, making it, for its size, one of the most

important centres of avian endemism in Asia.

Every birder should familiarise themselves with the full list of endemic species, almost all of which can be seen during a visit of 10 days to two weeks. They range from the spectacular and gaudy to the subtle and cryptic, as follows: Taiwan Partridge, Taiwan Bamboo Partridge, Swinhoe's Pheasant, Mikado Pheasant, Taiwan Barbet, Taiwan Blue Magpie, Chestnut-bellied Tit, Yellow Tit, Styan's Bulbul, Taiwan Wren-babbler, Taiwan Bush Warbler, Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler, Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Taiwan Hwamei, Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, Rusty Laughingthrush, White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Yuhina, Flamecrest, Collared Bush Robin, Taiwan Whistling Thrush and Taiwan Rosefinch. There are also dozens of endemic subspecies.

While the endemics are a top priority for many visiting birders, there is much more to see in the 'beautiful island'. In particular, it is home to two species classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International: Taiwan has the world's most important wintering population of Black-faced Spoonbill, and is also home to Chinese Crested Tern, a species thought to be possibly extinct until a tiny breeding population was discovered on Taiwan-administered islands off China in 2000. Among many other specialities and sought-after birds



Order before 2.30pm Monday to Friday & get your order **NEXT DAY** (Sat extra).

al with" "Uttings rock"

VISIT OUR WEBSITE NOW AND REGISTER NOW! - To receive exclusive offers and promotional emails every week...www.uttings.co.uk

SWAROVSKI OPTIK

Birding Tripods
Ideal for Birdwatching



Aluminium Tripods

AT110	c/w DH101 Head	£179
AT110	c/w DH101 Head	£349
Carbon Fibre Tripods		
CT Travel c/w DH101 Head		£489
CT110 c/w DH101 Head		£499

Manfrotto

BIRDING TRIPODS



ALUMINIUM TRIPODS

190 X Pro 3	NEW	£159.99
190 X Pro 4	NEW	£169.99
195 X Pro 3	NEW	£189.00

CARBON FIBRE TRIPODS

MT190 CX Pro 3	NEW	£229.00
MT190 CX Pro 4	NEW	£249.00
MT295 CX Pro 3	NEW	£259.00
MT295 CX Pro 4	NEW	£272.00

FLUID HEADS

718 F	£64.99
780 B/C2	£59.99
710 C	£110.00
710 B	£109.99
Mini 500A/B	£109.99
Mini 502 A/B	£140.00
Mini 502 A/B	£140.00

ACCESSORIES

Fluid Head: from **£279.00**

Quick Release: from **£110.00**

Purses from **£10.00**

**BACKPACK
RRP £139**

With all Swarovski
ATS/STS or ATX/STX
Bundles

**12 Months
Interest Free
Credit**

FREE
Swarovski
Cleaning
Kit worth
£30



SWAROVSKI OPTIK

ATS/STS HD

HIGH DEFINITION

Giving you all the features that you would look for in a lightweight, reliable spotting scope, providing the perfect start for anyone taking an interest, for instance, in the world of birdwatching.

ANGLED OR STRAIGHT
 ATS/STS HD 65mm £1200 £1080
 ATS/STS HD 80mm £1720 £1549

STRAIGHT OPTIONS - ANGLED OR STRAIGHT
Includes FREE Lowpower Scope Travel 200AW Backpack RRP £139

ATS/STS HD 65mm c/w 20-60x zoom £1620 £1459 £146
 ATS/STS HD 65mm c/w 25-50x zoom £1710 £1539 £154
 ATS/STS HD 80mm c/w 20-60x zoom £2140 £1928 £193
 ATS/STS HD 80mm c/w 25-50x zoom £2230 £2008 £201

DISCOUNT ACCESSORIES
 TS1 800 Telescope Lens for your SLR £435 £278
 DSR II Swivel Adapter £120 £115
 TS11 Telescope Rail \$50 on Call

TELESCOPE EYEPIECES
 45-60x Zoom Eyepiece £165 £157
 25-50x W Zoom Eyepiece £457 £451

See website for details



EDG

SPOTTING SCOPES



Nikon's EDG Fieldsopes deliver a spectacular field of view with crystal clear, edge to edge views and intense, fully saturated colours - superb.

ANGLED OR STRAIGHT

EDG 65mm Angled or Straight	RRP	£1565.99	£1299
EDG 85mm Angled or Straight		£1981.99	£1599

EDG VR ACCESSORIES

FSA-L2 Fieldscope Digital SLR Attachment	£499
Fieldscope Eyepiece Mount Adapter EMA-1	£49.99
Stay on Case	£84.99
Eyepieces	From £279.99

EDG VR 85 FIELDSCOPE

See website for details and specifications



DIASCOPE 

SPOTTING SCOPES

SAVE UP TO £596

 **PREMIER DEALER**

24 & 36 Months Finance

Innovative high performance spotting scopes with dual focus system and wide panorama field of view, unmatched brilliant imaging and up to 75x zoom

BUNDLES
 65 T*FL Angled or Straight ch/w 15-56x Eyepiece
 85 T*FL Angled ch/w 20-75x Eyepiece

DIASCOPE ACCESSORIES Zeiss Stay on Case RRP £150 **NOW £125** + SKUA Stay on Case **£79**

RRP
 £2230 **£1699**
 £2695 **£2099**

24 & 36 MONTHS FINANCE AVAILABLE
 See website for details

NEW ZEISS TRIPOD SET with Video Head and Carry strap RRP £380 NOW £339.99

GITZO

TRIPODS



GT1531	RRP	NOW
GT2541	£529.95	£425.99
GT2541	£709.95	£499.99
GT2542LS	£719.99	£599.99
GH17200R 2 Way Head	£234.55	£194.99
GH27200R 2 Way Head	£279.55	£249.99
GS3370 MC DP Plate	£41.95	£34.99

Velbon

BIRDING TRIPODS



Sherpa 200R	RRP	NOW
clw PH157Q Head	£110	£63
Sherpa 4370D		
clw PH157Q Head	£149.99	£75
GEO E643D Carbon Fibre		
clw QHD 63D B85 Head	£375	£258

+ HAWKE

Sapphire ED

Spotting Scopes

Complete with a sculpted stay-on protective cover



Sapphire ED	RRP	NOW
20-60x82 Angled	£799.99	£769.95



Nikon ED 50
FIELDSCOPES

Compact & lightweight with Stearmid lens

ANGLED OR STRAIGHT
c/w 13-40x MRO Eyepiece
& Hard Hold Case

RRP NOV
£810.99 £579



BUNDLE DEALS...

PLUS FREE
Tripod Carrying System RRP £69
with TSN 883

SAVE
£700

TSN 883/884
SPOTTING-SCOPE
ANGLED FOR STABILITY

Redefining the standards of color brilliance.

TSN 883/884 c/w 25-60x, RRP NOW £2299
 SOC & Tripod Carrying System £2999 **£2249**

Kowa Eyepieces
 Kowa Stay on Cases

from **£195**
 from **£49**



SAVE
£300

TSN 603/604
 SPOTTING-SCOPE WITH PRESTIGE 10 YEAR WARRANTY

TSN 603 c/w 25-60x & SOC RRP NOW £1399 **£1099**

TSN 601/2
 SPOTTING-SCOPE WITH PRESTIGE 10 YEAR WARRANTY

Light weight ideal for beginners.

TSN 601 - Body only £529 **£399**
 c/w 25-60x & SOC **£899** **£599**

RRP NOW
£529 **£399**
£899 **£599**



acuter.

NATURECLOSE
NATUREPROOF SPOTTING SCOPES

Ideal for birdwatching, target spotting & general nature observations, excellent optical performance, with all models delivering crisp, high resolution images with excellent colour correction.

16-48x65	£129
20-60x80	£169
22-67x100	£230



HELIOS

FIELDMASTER SPOTTING SCOPES
With Stay-On Case & tubular tripod. Can be fitted to a full-size tripod via its tripod bush.

APO 30-90x90	£125
15-45x60 ED Dual Speed	£139
20-60x80 ED Dual Speed	£199
28-66x12 Triplet Dual Speed	£395



NEW
NEW FIELDMASTER ED8xDS 85
DUAL SPEED SPOTTING SCOPE

ED8xDS c/w 20-60mm Eyepiece & 30C £549



Endurance & Endurance ED

	RRP	NOW
Endurance 16-48x68 A	\$389.99	\$331.99
20-60x85 A	\$429.99	\$376.99
Endurance ED 16-48x68 A	\$529.99	\$475.99
20-60x85 A	\$629.99	\$565.99
Evenlighters		\$72.99



Vantage & Nature Trek
Spotting Scopes

	RRP	NOW
Vantage 20-60x60 A	\$129.99	\$107.99
24-72x70 A	\$159.99	\$134.99
Nature Trek 18-55x65 A	\$189.99	\$178.99
20-60x80 A	\$209.99	\$196.99



HAWKE

Frontier ED

Spotting Scopes

Complete with a stay-on soft canvas scope cover



Frontier ED
20-60x85 Angled

RRP £659.99

NOW £629.99



HAWKE

Panorama ED

Spotting Scopes

Complete with a sculpted stay-on protective cover



Panorama ED
20-60x82 Angled

RRP £799

NOW £769.95

Fax:
01603 619849

24 & 36 MONTHS FINANCE

APR 19.5%

INSTANT DECISION

NO PAPERWORK

Now available on all orders over £500



We are pleased to offer 24 & 36 Months Finance on all orders over £500. Apply and sign online to get an instant decision in just a few minutes with no paperwork whatsoever. See website for details.



opticon DBA OASIS



SAVE £100
DBA Oasis 8x42 RRP £629 NOW £499
DBA Oasis 10x42 RRP £629 NOW £499

opticon T3 TRAILFINDER



SAVE £50
T3 Trailfinder WP 8x32 £129 RRP
T3 Trailfinder WP 8x32 £129 RRP

OVER 250 SPECIAL OFFERS ON OUR WEBSITE
www.uttings.co.uk

Nikon TRAVELITE EX

8x25	RRP £135.99	£79
9x25	RRP £145.99	£85
10x25	RRP £155.99	£89
12x25	RRP £165.99	£95

Nikon PROSTAFF S

8x42	RRP £219.99	£189.99
10x42	RRP £239.99	£209.99
10x50	RRP £249.99	£219.99
12x50	RRP £269.99	£239.99

NEW EL BINOCULARS WITH FIELD PRO PACKAGE

IN STOCK

THE ULTIMATE BIRDING BINO

EL WITH FIELD PRO PACKAGE
incl. field bag pro, eyepiece cover, objective lens covers & lift carrying strap pro

8x32 W B	RRP £1640	NOW £1475
10x32 W B	RRP £1660	NOW £1495
8x42 W B	RRP £2000	NOW £1799
10x42 W B	RRP £2020	NOW £1820
10x50 W B	RRP £2150	NOW £1935
12x50 W B	RRP £2170	NOW £1955

SWAROVSKI OPTIK EL LIMITLESS PERFECTION

The launch of the EL binoculars by SWAROVSKI OPTIK marked a milestone in long-range optics. These binoculars have now been further enhanced following intensive development & a great deal of dedication. The result of these efforts is the best EL family ever. The crystal-clear optics provided by SWAROVISION technology and the unique ergonomic design, including the EL wrap-around grip, are enhanced by the new, perfectly harmonized FieldPro package.

12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT 10% DEPOSIT

FREE Swarovski Cleaning Set worth £30 with Swarovski Binoculars

ZEISS Compact Binoculars

Conquest Compact
Compact pocket binoculars for entry level.

8x20	RRP £355	NOW £219
10x25	RRP £410	NOW £269

Victory Compact
High performance optics for maximum performance in pocket format.

8x20	RRP £540	NOW £469
10x25	RRP £570	NOW £499

ZEISS NEW Conquest HD Binoculars

SAVE UP TO £141

Modern observation optics - the clear and neutral colour reproduction sets new standards in its class.

8x32 HD	RRP £700	NOW £659
10x32 HD	RRP £740	NOW £699
10x42 HD	RRP £815	NOW £729
8x56 HD	RRP £1185	NOW £1039
10x56 HD	RRP £1220	NOW £1079
15x56 HD	RRP £1290	NOW £1149

Nikon MONARCH 5 & 7

Monarch 5 8x42	RRP £399.99	NOW £349.99
Monarch 5 10x42	RRP £429.99	NOW £379.99
Monarch 5 8x56	RRP £719.99	NOW £649.99
Monarch 5 10x56	RRP £789.99	NOW £719.99
Monarch 5 15x56	RRP £819.99	NOW £749.99
Monarch 7 8x30	RRP £319.99	NOW £269.99
Monarch 7 10x30	RRP £349.99	NOW £299.99
Monarch 7 8x42	RRP £549.99	NOW £469.99
Monarch 7 10x42	RRP £599.99	NOW £499.99

Nikon High Grade Light

SAVE UP TO £710

8x32	RRP £991.99	£579.99
10x32	RRP £1043.99	£599.99
8x42	RRP £1355.99	£699.99
10x42	RRP £1459.99	£749.99

SWAROVSKI OPTIK SLC PERFECTION MEETS TRADITION

Compact & slim, great for using when you're observing wildlife, whether during the day or at twilight.

12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT 10% DEPOSIT

SLC 8x42	RRP £1310	NOW £1179
SLC 10x42	RRP £1380	NOW £1242
SLC 8x56	RRP £1640	NOW £1475
SLC 10x56	RRP £1650	NOW £1520
SLC 15x56	RRP £1740	NOW £1565

EL TRAVELER
EXPERIENCE THE MOMENT
Crystal-clear optics with a large field of view

CL COMPANION
ALWAYS BY YOUR SIDE
The number one compact, lightweight binocular

CL POCKET COMPACTS
PUTS THE WORLD IN YOUR POCKET
Outstanding optical clarity

8x32	RRP £1600	NOW £1440
10x32	RRP £1630	NOW £1467
8x30	RRP £850	NOW £765
8x25	RRP £560	NOW £505
10x25	RRP £870	NOW £785
10x15	RRP £600	NOW £548

ZEISS NEW Victory HT Binoculars

The brightest premium binoculars in the world with up to more than 95% light transmission for greater brightness and longer observation.

8x42	RRP £1730	NOW £1499
10x42	RRP £1760	NOW £1529
8x54	RRP £1910	NOW £1659
10x54	RRP £1950	NOW £1699

ZEISS Victory SF Binoculars

Experience every spectacle nature has to offer thanks to brilliant optics & an unparalleled natural wide-angle field of view.

8x42	RRP £2050	NOW £1845
10x42	RRP £2075	NOW £1875

Nikon SUPERIOR OPTICS

EDGE

For the birdier looking for superior optical performance in a lightweight package - SUPERIOR

12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT 10% DEPOSIT

8x32	RRP £1480.99	NOW £1399.99
10x32	RRP £1582.99	NOW £1519.99
7x42	RRP £1531.99	NOW £1429.99
8x42	RRP £1633.99	NOW £1539.99
10x42	RRP £1725.99	NOW £1649.99

Canon Image Stabilising Binoculars

NEW IS II Model

8x25	RRP £384.99	NOW £244.99
12x36	RRP £669.99	NOW £549.99
10x42L	RRP £1949.99	NOW £1269.99
15x50	RRP £1329.99	NOW £849.99
18x50	RRP £1599.99	NOW £999.99

Leica ULTRAVID HD & HD PLUS

EXCELLENCE IN BRIGHTNESS & MECHANICAL PERFORMANCE

Experience nature in razor-sharp details. Constructed to be a reliable companion

TRINOVID
RUGGED & RELIABLE
Vivid and colorful images.

8x42	RRP £1170	NOW £1049
10x42	RRP £1220	NOW £1099

DUOVID BRILLIANT & FLEXIBLE

Allows observers to adapt swiftly to any situation. Offering a choice of two magnification factors.

TRINOVID BCA COMPACTS
High quality optics provide great resolving power in small size, making them the perfect companion for various occasions.

8-12x42	RRP £2130	NOW £1799
10-15x50	RRP £2300	NOW £1949
8x20	RRP £390	NOW £329
10x25	RRP £420	NOW £349

ZEISS Terra Binoculars

Features an attractive, modern design and with a weight of only 690g is not only extremely light, but thanks to its slim form also exceptionally compact and robust.

ED 8x42	RRP £360	NOW £299
ED 10x42	RRP £405	NOW £339
ED 8x25 NEW Compact	RRP £285	NOW £229
ED 10x25 NEW Compact	RRP £280	NOW £249

opticon Imagic BGA SE RP
Roof Prism Binoculars

SAVE £200

8x32	RRP £429	NOW £229
10x42	RRP £429	NOW SOLD OUT

HAWKE NatureTrek Series

NEW Frontier & Endurance 2015 Models

8x32	RRP £109.99	NOW £99.99
10x32	RRP £119.99	NOW £109.99
8x42	RRP £129.99	NOW £119.99
10x42	RRP £139.99	NOW £129.99
10x50	RRP £144.99	NOW £134.99
12x50	RRP £149.99	NOW £139.99

HAWKE Endurance ED
Roof Prism Binoculars

NEW

Green or Black	RRP £159.99	NOW £149.99
8x32	RRP £169.99	NOW £159.99
10x32	RRP £189.99	NOW £179.99
8x42	RRP £199.99	NOW £189.99
10x42	RRP £219.99	NOW £209.99
10x50	RRP £229.99	NOW £219.99
12x50	RRP £239.99	NOW £229.99

HAWKE Frontier ED
Roof Prism Binoculars

NEW

Green or Black	RRP £219.99	NOW £199.99
8x32	RRP £229.99	NOW £209.99
10x32	RRP £249.99	NOW £229.99
8x42	RRP £259.99	NOW £239.99
10x42	RRP £259.99	NOW £239.99

opticon Explorer WA Oasis-C
Wide Angle Binoculars

NEW MODEL

8x42	RRP £209	NOW £209
10x42	RRP £219	NOW £209

opticon Traveller BGA Mg Black
Pocket Binoculars

NEW MODEL

6x32 BGA MG Black	RRP £229	NOW £219
8x32 BGA MG Black	RRP £239	NOW £229
10x32 BGA MG Black	RRP £249	NOW £239

opticon Natura BGA
Roof Prism Binoculars

8x42	RRP £249	NOW £239
10x42	RRP £259	NOW £259

Bushnell H20 Compacts
Folding Roof Prism Binos

O-ring sealed and nitrogen purged to ensure stunning views no matter how wet they get.

8x25	RRP £89.95	NOW £49
10x25	RRP £94.95	NOW £55
12x25	RRP £99.95	NOW £59

Bushnell H20 Full Size
Roof Prism Binos

The Bushnell H20 Full Size Binoculars pack powerful, bright optics into a 100% waterproof package.

8x42	RRP £150	NOW £115
10x42	RRP £170	NOW £129

Bushnell Natureview
Roof Prism Binoculars

An outstanding long-range binocular. Ideal for long-distance birding or wildlife observation. Specially designed to capture natural wonders.

8x32 - Green	RRP £140	NOW £99
8x42 - Green	RRP £195	NOW £139
10x42 - Green	RRP £210	NOW £149

Bushnell Elite HD ED
Roof Prism Binoculars

UNDER 1/2 PRICE

Bright, Clear, HD Imagery. 100% waterproof and fogproof with a tough, lightweight magnesium body.

HD 8x42 ED	RRP £749	NOW £369
HD 10x42 ED	RRP £799	NOW £399

Bushnell Trophy Cam Essential HD
Low Glow Trail Camera

12 MP high-quality full color resolution. HD Video - 1280x720 pixels. Field Scan 2x time-lapse.

119437 - RRP £170 £149

Bushnell Aggressor HD Low Glow
with B/W Text LCD

14MP - Low Glow with a with a removable "ARD" anti-reflection LED cover. Features a super fast 0.2-second trigger speed. 1920x1080p Video.

119774 - Black RRP £235 NOW £195
119775 - Realtree Xtra Camo RRP £260 NOW £215

HIDE CLAMPS & MOUNTS

Opticon Car Window Mount	RRP £46	NOW £46
Opticon BC-2 Hide Mount	RRP £79	NOW £79
Opticon Universal Mount	RRP £55	NOW £55
Velbon Hide Clamp	RRP £45.99	NOW £45.99
Leupold Windown Mounts	RRP £84.99	NOW £84.99
Manfrotto Column Mounts	RRP from £74.99	NOW from £74.99

SWAROVSKI OPTIK SCOPE ACCESSORIES

T2 Adaptor - connects the TIS-APD-dispensing adaptor to the EF mount £21.99

DCB-5 Digital Camera Base Inc. Balance Rail £275

DCB II Swing Adapter £278

TIS 800 Telephoto Lens Adapter £435

SWAROVSKI OPTIK SCOPE ACCESSORIES

Cleaning Kit £30

Universal Tripod Adaptor £69.99

Tree Fixing Screw £45

SSR II Scope Rail £120

WILDLIFE WATCHING SUPPLIES

STANDARD DOME HIDE
Lightweight, compact, quick to put up £239

LARGE DOME HIDE
Lightweight, compact, quick to put up £279

Scope Travel 200 AW - Backpack RRP £139 £69

lowepro OPTICS SERIES

Scope Travel 200 AW - Backpack RRP £139 £69

Bushnell NATUREVIEW Cam HD
Features GPS Geotagging

Breathtaking 1080p HD video make this the best choice for the most stunning views.

119438 - RRP £225 £119

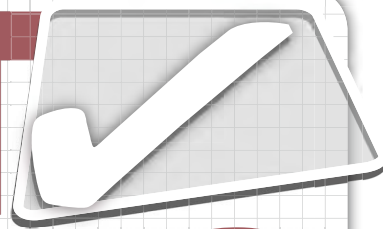
OVER 11 MILLION PAGE VIEWS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS

OVER 10,000 PRODUCTS ONLINE

OVER 20,000 SKUs

E+OE Prices subject to change. Goods subject to availability

EXPERT REVIEWS



Your trusted guide to what's new in birding: bit.ly/birdwatchreviews



Ready and stable

What are the benefits of using image-stabilised optics? **Mike Alibone** looks at two new niche binoculars from Canon which deliver impressive results.

REVIEW

Canon 10x30 IS II and 12x36 IS III binoculars

'UNCONVENTIONAL' is perhaps the first word to spring to mind when it comes to image-stabilisation binoculars, with many birders sceptical about products that integrate electronics with optics. Any doubts I might have had dissolved rapidly, however, from the moment I started using these two new models from Canon.

Launched in August and replacing the previous models of the same dimensions, the 10x30 IS II and 12x36 IS III are the latest upgrades to the existing series of Canon's IS binoculars, which also includes 8x25, 10x42, 15x50 and 18x50 models.

When compared with conventional binoculars their appearance is distinctly different. This is because the body required to house the image-stabilisation system needs to be extensive enough to accommodate sensors and a power source, and as a result, there is no central hinge.

The body material appears to be a lightweight polymer which means, despite the inbuilt technology, they are moderately light, both models comparing favourably with conventional binoculars of similar dimensions. There is a rubberised coating which adds resistance to rain, but they lack the 'waterproof' or 'all weather' attributes of the larger

models within the range.

The stabilisation system is powered by two alkaline AA batteries which, when inserted into the compartment between the objective lenses, add between 40 g and 50 g to the overall weight. Their operating life varies between 9 hours at +25°C and one hour at temperatures down to -10°C. It's worth remembering that, without the batteries, the binoculars operate in the same way as conventional models, so all is not lost if the power runs out in the field.

To overcome the lack of a central hinge which is normally used to set the interpupillary distance of the oculars, the latter are mounted on a synchronised swivel system so that they can be rotated to achieve the most comfortable viewing position for your eyes. Having achieved this, you then need to find a comfortable holding position which facilitates both focusing and operation of the IS system. There is a depression in the underside of the body into which one thumb from the 'holding hand' fits comfortably, but I needed to place the other thumb under the base of the right ocular in order to comfortably operate the central focusing wheel with my index finger, while using my middle finger to operate the IS system.

Narrow and small in diameter, the focusing wheel is the same design as those found in many telescopes, and the same single fingertip operation is employed to turn it through approximately 1.2

clockwise rotations from close focus to infinity. It turns very smoothly: it's fast and accurate, and its mechanics result in an external movement of the lenses, as does the single-eye adjustment, which is located on the right ocular. The eyecups are basic, fold-down rubber style.



60 Photo challenge

It's Christmas, so this month's challenge just has to be Robin – but it has to be in a wintry setting, says Steve Young.

61 Robins and Chats

Does this much-anticipated monograph from Christopher Helm live up to expectations?

61 Capturing young minds

Follow the story of six-year-old Jack as he meets some of Britain's best-known birds.

62 Peregrines in pictures

A new photo book charts the breeding cycle of a pair of Peregrine Falcons nesting on Norwich Cathedral.

62 Your birding year

The 2016 *Birdwatcher's Yearbook* is out now, and is a must for birders.

62 What's on the Bookshelf?

A new Collins/BTO collaboration covers rare and scarce birds recorded in Britain and Ireland.

THIS MONTH'S EXPERT PANEL



DOMINIC MITCHELL is *Birdwatch*'s founder and Managing Editor. He has been birding in Britain and abroad for more than 40 years.



DAVID CALLAHAN Prior to joining *Birdwatch*, David trained as a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum.



MIKE ALIBONE is *Birdwatch*'s Optics Editor. He has been testing binoculars and telescopes for more than a decade.



HEATHER O'CONNOR is Bookshop Manager. She is enjoying encouraging her young son's growing interest in wildlife.



STEVE YOUNG is Photographic Consultant for *Birdwatch* and an award-winning wildlife photographer.



REBECCA ARMSTRONG has been working for *Birdwatch* for seven years and is a self-confessed app junkie.

To operate the stabilisation system you simply press, and continue to hold down, a small button located immediately behind the focusing wheel. A small green light offset to the left of this lights up to indicate the system is receiving power and is activated. To deactivate it take your finger off the button: it's as simple as that.

The system is known as the vari-angle prism type. Two sensors detect horizontal and vertical shaking respectively. The two prisms in both the left and right sides of the binocular are controlled by a microprocessor to instantly adjust the refraction angle of the incoming light. There is an immediate response, with no time-lag and the image remains stable even when panning.

These binoculars offer clear advantages. I was able to hold them with one hand and, with the IS activated, I did not experience the image shake that accompanies one-handed operation of conventional models. This meant I could see detail while at the same time taking notes, sketching or having a telephone conversation. I was also able to clearly observe birds as a passenger from a moving car along a bumpy farmland track, as well as in windy conditions, without any loss of detail.

I suggest the biggest advantage of all – which sadly I wasn't able to test – would be the use of these binoculars on a pelagic trip, on which the stabilisation would negate the effect on the image of a vessel's pitching and rolling on the surface of the ocean.

But what about the optical quality? I must confess to being really quite amazed at how both

Edge to edge sharpness

REVIEW

Pentax ZD 8x43 WP binocular

EARLIER this year, Ricoh Imaging announced the launch of new Pentax binoculars. The Z-series represents the flagship range, with all models featuring fully multicoated optics, a new enhanced light transmission coating and hydrophobic coatings to help deflect water, oil, dust and other particles.

The ZD 8x43 WP constitutes an ideal representative for the brand. It's not the most expensive, retailing at £150 below the corresponding 'ED' model in the same range, but it does have some interesting features to consider.

One of these is the locking dioptre ring, which is located on the right ocular. The ability to lock the dioptre setting is a necessity in binoculars which integrate the dioptre adjustment with the central focusing wheel, but it's less commonly found with an ocular-mounted mechanism. The grippy, rubber-clad ring is pulled up, turned to adjust and pushed down again to lock the desired setting. There is ample space between the ring and the base of the eyecup to perform this operation without having to move the latter from its base position. There are three further 'twist and click' settings for the eyecups above this base.

Another useful feature of the model is the method of tethering the objective lens

covers. These have relatively long attachment leads which enable them to be held in place by a screw-cap at the distal end of the binocular's central hinge. They can easily be removed and refitted, but this means of attachment ensures they won't fall off and, most importantly, they hang below the bridge, well away from the lenses, so there is no possibility of their flipping up to cover the objectives while in use.

The binocular appears well constructed, nicely balanced and comfortable to hold. This is despite the poorly positioned strap-lugs in relation to the focusing wheel, although this is mitigated somewhat by underbody thumb-rests to help with correct hand positioning.

The magnesium alloy body ensures the model is reasonably light in weight. The soft, rubber-covered eyecups are comfortable enough. I found the central focusing wheel offered just a little more turning resistance

than expected. Just over 1.5 anti-clockwise turns takes the focused image from 1.8 m to infinity, although it takes only a fraction of a turn to change the focus between subjects at 20 m range and those on the 'distant horizon'.

The ZD delivers a very nice image. It's sharp to the edge, bright and the colours are contrasting and natural, with the overall colour rendition appearing on the warm side of neutral. However, at just 110 m at 1,000 m, the field of view is rather modest for a binocular of this specification. A degree of chromatic aberration is evident in an estimated 25-30 per cent of the periphery of the field.

Along with the objective covers, the ZD 8x43 WP accessory package includes a flexible rainguard, a soft, lightly padded carry case and a very basic, unpadded neck-strap.

Mike Alibone



MORE INFO Price: £849 • Size: 146x126 mm • Weight: 695 g • Field of view: 110 m at 1,000 m • Light transmission: not available Close focus: 2 m • Gas-filled: yes • Waterproof: yes • Guarantee: 30 years

Continued on page 60

STEVE YOUNG'S PHOTO CHALLENGE

Winter Robin



Taken at eye level to emphasise the out-of-focus foreground and isolate the bird in the snow, this could be the perfect Christmas card.

AS this is the last issue of 2015 and it's nearly Christmas, I'm going for a very easy challenge this month. I almost feel like Santa handing out presents, it's such a nice one!

I want to see your images of Britain's favourite bird, Robin. It has to be in a winter setting, though, so that rules out any birds on blossoming branches or singing on a leafy twig. Robins do sing during winter sometimes, but a bird perched on a bare twig doesn't shout 'winter'. If that branch is covered in snow, however, or there's falling snow framing the bird, well, that could be the winning shot, so send it in!

The most obvious winter theme is a lovely shot in snow, but a frosty or icy setting is another option, or maybe several individuals huddled together in a communal roost.

I look forward to receiving your images and to see if we can beat the record currently held by the Puffin challenge of a few months back – good luck!

To enter, email your best candidates to editorial@birdwatch.co.uk. The competition closes on 24 December. The prize is a copy of the *The Peregrines of Norwich Cathedral* by Robin Chittenden. ■

• Turn to page 77 to find out who won October's challenge, Autumn.

Continued from page 59

models stepped up to the mark to deliver some seriously good imagery. With high magnification pitched against a relatively small objective diameter resulting in an exit pupil as low as 3, I was surprised to discover just how bright the image was. Even in low light conditions during the last hour or so of daylight on an overcast afternoon in October, the image brightness ensured no loss of detail, adding to the viewing experience of Bedfordshire's first Bufflehead – even though its origin may be open to debate.

Canon has used doublet field-flattener lenses to minimise distortion in both models. The

image remains sharp across the whole field of view with no deterioration at the edges. The field itself is quite narrow in the 12x magnification model and this may have created the perception that the image appeared to be fractionally less bright than that of the 10x model.

I was pleased with the natural colours and contrast in both models, while the overall rendition is cold, even 'icy', which perhaps enhances sharpness. There is a degree of chromatic aberration which appears more uniform across the image than in other binoculars I have tested. It's not a major issue, though.

One feature that may be an issue for some, however, is the close-focus distance. The manufacturer's figures of 4.2 m and 6 m for the 10x and 12x models respectively will not readily appeal to watchers of insects, and in my own testing I was not able to focus clearly on any objects closer than 4.7 m and 7.7 m.

Despite the long close focus distance and lack of waterproofing, I was seriously

impressed with both models although, in my opinion, the smaller of the two has the edge and is the most appealing. I would not hesitate to recommend them to anyone who spends a significant amount of time on pelagic trips.

Both models come with a zippered padded case with shoulder-strap, a rather modest, unpadded neck-strap and individual eyepiece caps. There is no rainguard. ■

Did you know?

IN addition to the vari-angle prism type of stabilisation technology, there are two other types. The gyro type, which uses a high-speed motor-driven gyroscope attached to a prism, and a mechanical type, using a cardanic suspension system, which does not require batteries. Both add significant weight and are unable to distinguish between shake and panning; as such the image is not stable when panning.

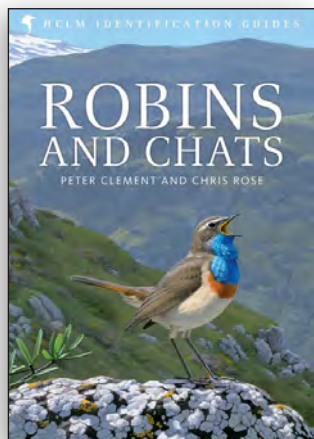
FURTHER INFO

	10x30 IS II	12x36 IS III
■ Price	£480	£700
■ Size	150x127 mm	174x127 mm
■ Weight	600 g	660 g
■ Field of view (at 1,000 m)	105 m	87.5 m
■ Light transmission	Not available	Not available
■ Close focus	4.2 m	6 m
■ Gas-filled	No	No
■ Waterproof	No	No
■ Guarantee	1 year	1 year

VERDICT

- ✓ Image delivers natural colours, with good contrast
- ✓ Image remains sharp across the field of view
- ✗ Close focus distance is long in both models

A fact-packed monograph



THIS, the latest addition to the Helm Identification Guides series, is one of the most anticipated, in part due to its lengthy gestation period of well over a decade. This production time has coincided with a taxonomic upheaval of its subject matter, as chats and their nearest relatives have been shown by molecular analysis to be closely allied with the Old World flycatchers Muscicapidae, rather than their traditional sister group, the thrushes Turdidae, as revealed in a landmark paper by Sangster *et al* (2010).

This means that there is a potential misalignment between the book's subject matter and taxonomic reality. This is dealt with in an introductory chapter by Per Alström, one of the co-authors of that landmark paper, which led to a radical reshuffling of chats and flycatchers, with some genera being compounded and placed within the Muscicapidae and others being moved to the thrush family. The new taxonomy is well delineated in this chapter, but the start-point of the book's text means that it actually includes some members of the Turdidae due to their superficial similarity to chats: bluebirds and cochoas, as well as a former cuckoo-shrike in Black-breasted Fruithunter.

There are a fair amount of anomalies resulting from this introduction, with some of the splits suggested by Sangster *et al* and previous authors being adopted (for example, moving

White-bellied Redstart from the monotypic genus *Hodgsonius* to *Luscinia* and placing White-capped Redstart and Plumbeous and Luzon Water Redstarts in *Phoenicurus*), while others aren't (White-crowned and Andaman Shamas remain lumped with White-rumped, and Bagobo Babbler – moved to the subfamily Saxicolinae in 2010 – is completely omitted), leading to the book holding a real 'taxonomy in flux'. A last-minute revision of genera and order would have dealt with this and kept the book in line with world taxonomies such as that of the International Ornithological Congress.

Among Western Palearctic forms covered here, Red-tailed and Kurdistan Wheatears and Red-flanked and Himalayan Bluetails are split, but Northern and Seeböhm's Wheatears and European, Siberian, Stejneger's and African Stonechats remain lumped, while the author considers the two to three splits of Mourning Wheatear recognised by some authorities as possibly premature. The potential species status of all is acknowledged, however, and they are separated as different taxa.

The book's overall remit is thus the small, thrush-like birds traditionally termed chats: wheatears, Old World robins, stonechats and redstarts, as well as shortwings, akalats, alethes, shamas and forktails. This is a charming and engaging group however it is defined, and in representing these forms the book delivers copiously. Using the taxonomic decisions mentioned, it covers 175 species all told, with all generally accepted subspecies also described in detail.

Those familiar with other volumes in this weighty series will recognise the structure of the text, with much detail on names and subspecies, a physical description and identification notes, similar species, vocalisations, habitat, behaviour, breeding, status, movements and distribution, geographical variation, moult, measurements

and taxonomy. All provide a richness of data summarised from the literature, although the sections on moult and the ageing of individual birds in several photos have also been criticised online.

Overall, however, this is a well-turned-out book. Each species gets a minimum of two pages, with the lowest number logically going to the more obscure forms such as the cochoas, and the greatest amount being given to those well-studied and variable species found in the Western Palearctic – Common Stonechat, for instance, gets a whopping 20 pages.

The photographs are of good quality and go some way towards illustrating all the plumages of every species, which all get at least two images, and often substantially more – again, Common Stonechat gets 11 to

illustrate its major variations in both male and female plumages.

The plates by Chris Rose are painstakingly accurate and comprehensive works of art, easily the equivalent of those in *HBW* or the best modern field guides, with individual birds captured in life-like but comparable poses. If, like me, you like a chat, there is plenty here to pore over and reflect on seeing in the field, and most of the distinctive subspecies are illustrated in naturalistic colours.

This fact-packed book is unlikely to be superseded for some time. Most readers will use it as a reference to the various species' and subspecies' identification and distribution, a purpose for which it is admirably cut out, and a worthy extra weight to that reinforced shelf reserved for the series. **David Callahan**

REFERENCE

- Sangster, G., Alström, P., Forsmark, E., and Olsson, U. 2010. Multi-locus phylogenetic analysis of Old World chats and flycatchers reveals extensive paraphyly at family, subfamily and genus level (Aves: Muscicapidae). *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 57: 380-392.
- stephen-menzie.squarespace.com/blog/2015/10/2/robins-and-chats.

Young minds



real-life photographs, Jack learns some interesting facts from a variety of birds (including Robin and Blue Tit, plus wintering Snow Bunting and Brent Goose) that then enable him to fly like a bird.

The book is bright, bold and pitched perfectly for small children (three years and under) who can engage with the photographs of the birds, but also for older children who are just learning to read and are excited to build on their burgeoning wildlife knowledge.

The DVD containing all five episodes of the TV series would appeal more to the 0-3 age group due to its simplicity and gentle pace, but older children may be thirsty for a bit more content.

Heather O'Connor, with the help of Aaron O'Connor, age 4½

MORE INFO

- *Robins and Chats* by Peter Clement and Chris Rose (Christopher Helm, London, 2015).
- 688 pages, 64 colour plates, more than 600 colour photographs, plus figures and maps.
- ISBN 9780713639636. Hbk £60.

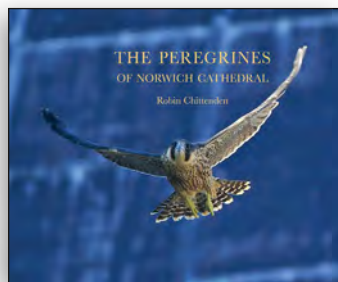
Birdwatch Bookshop
from
£53.99

MORE INFO

- *Wildlife Jack: I Want to Fly* by Ed Kellie (National Trust Books, Swindon, 2015).
- 32 pages, numerous colour illustrations and photos.
- ISBN 9781909881433. Pbk, £6.99.
- *Wildlife Jack: Series 1* DVD narrated by Chris Packham.
- Five 7-minute episodes. Total runtime approx 36 minutes.
- SRP £7.49. Available from www.wildlifejack.com.



Peregrine in pictures



THOSE of us living in cities might be forgiven for thinking that Britain's Peregrine population is healthily growing. Recent research from the British Trust for Ornithology, however, has shown that it is at a virtual standstill – just 3 per cent growth between 2002 and 2014. But the species is thriving in many cities across England and watchpoints from London to Nottingham have proved to be popular tourist attractions.

Norwich is one such urban hot-spot. A pair has been successfully breeding on the city's beautiful cathedral since at least 2011, when the Hawk and Owl Trust set up a breeding platform on the spire. This new book by wildlife photographer Robin Chittenden – known to many birders as the man behind Birdline East Anglia – charts the story of these birds in

words and images.

As you might expect from a photographer, the main event here is the photos, with the text being little more than captions. The images are undeniably stunning. There's some seriously dramatic shots of juvenile birds in the air fighting over food, of an adult bird carrying a still-live Feral Rock Dove and of a Magpie mobbing the female.

The photos cover everything from food passes between the adult pair to birds at the nest, the juveniles learning to fly and finally moving on. There are also some lovely shots of the cathedral itself.

The book would make a nice souvenir for anyone who has visited the Norwich watchpoint, or serve as a way of experiencing these birds for those who haven't. **Rebecca Armstrong**

MORE INFO

- *The Peregrines of Norwich Cathedral* by Robin Chittenden (Red Hare Publishing, Cley, 2015).
- 48 pages, 52 colour photos.
- ISBN 9781910001189. Pbk, £12.50. For details on how to buy: www.robinchittenden.co.uk.

A year of birds



NOW in its 36th edition, *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook* is surely familiar to most – if not all – British birders. The guide is under the roof of a new publishing house, with a new editor, Neil Gartshore.

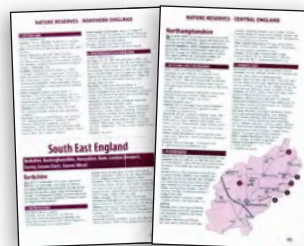
The 2016 edition is available now. The new publisher, Calluna Books, has stuck to the tried and tested formula, so fans of the series will find all their old favourites present and correct. Included are: a diary, events listings, the latest checklists for British birds, butterflies and dragonflies, contact details for county, national and international birding groups, directories of wildlife lecturers, photographers, artists, art galleries and trade outlets of

interest to birders, and tide tables.

The bulk of the guide is taken up by listings of almost 370 British and Irish bird and nature reserves. All information has been fully updated and covers locations and directions, key birds and contact details.

The special features in this issue include an interesting look at birding apps and an analysis of the pros of providing access to wildlife against the cons of disturbing – and possibly damaging – birdlife. Definitely worth a read is the outgoing editor's look back at the 35-year history of the *Yearbook*.

The guide remains an easy-to-use compendium of all the information you are likely to need to plan your birding year ahead. **Rebecca Armstrong**



MORE INFO

- *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook 2016* edited by Neil Gartshore (Calluna Books, Wareham, 2015).
- 328 pages, numerous black-and-white illustrations, photos and maps.
- ISBN 9780993347702. Pbk, £19.50.

Birdwatch Bookshop
from
£16.99

BOOKSHELF



Christmas is just around the corner and this month **Heather O'Connor** has some great gift recommendations.

IF you're looking for gift inspiration for friends and family, or just compiling your own wish-list, then the Birdwatch Bookshop has everything you need this Christmas.



At the top of everyone's list is sure to be our Book of the Month, the stunning new *Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America*. Featuring the very latest information on the identification of all the ducks, geese and swans in the Holarctic region, the detailed species accounts are complemented by stunning colour photos, plates and individual artworks painted by the author.

If you're planning a birding trip overseas next year,

then the Crossbill Guides are worth a browse for information on all the best sites for birding and nature watching at your destination. Recently published is the second volume on the Canary Islands, this time covering Tenerife and La Gomera, which followed the first volume on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura released earlier this year.

For tours much further afield, just released is the *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands*. As you would expect from the highly respected Helm Field Guides, every resident and migrant species from the region is covered in full detail and illustrated in a series of 124 beautiful colour plates.

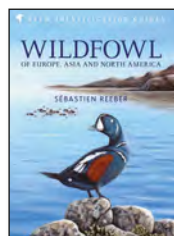
In a superb two-volume set, the *Collins BTO Guide to British Birds* and the *Guide to Rare British Birds* provides a comprehensive guide to every species recorded in Britain and Ireland. Start 2016 equipped with everything you need for a year of successful birding with *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook 2016*, now in its 36th year.

All these titles, plus hundreds more, can be ordered at www.birdwatch.co.uk/store or by using the form opposite. And remember to order early to ensure delivery in time for Christmas! ■



VISIT WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK/STORE TO BUY THESE AND MANY MORE BOOKS

Book of the month



Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America

Sébastien Reeber

£35 **ONLY £31.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £30.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 January 2016

**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£4**

THIS new comprehensive reference guide features current knowledge on the identification of the different species and subspecies of ducks, geese and swans in Europe, Asia and North America. The detailed species accounts cover taxonomy, specific and subspecific identification features, determination of age and sex, geographic variation, measurements, voice, moult and hybridisation. The current status of each species is treated with up-to-date information on distribution, population size, habitat and life-cycle. Featuring stunning colour photos, plates and individual artworks painted by the author, this new identification guide provides an unrivalled level of detail and a wealth of information essential for anyone interested in this fascinating group of birds.

Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands

Roger Safford, Adrian Skerrett and Frank Hawkins

£30 **ONLY £26.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £25.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 January 2016

Published 17 December

This new Helm Field Guide covers the whole of the Malagasy region. Every resident and migrant species is included in full detail and illustrated in a series of 124 colour plates.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£4**

A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Australia

Dean Ingwersen

£9.99 **ONLY £9.49**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £8.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 January 2016

This easy-to-use identification guide to the 280 bird species commonly seen in Australia features high-quality photographs, plus detailed species descriptions which include nomenclature, size, distribution, habits and habitat.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£1**

Birds of South-East Asia: Concise Edition

Craig Robson

£30 **ONLY £26.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £25.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

This new concise edition of the original and comprehensive field guide contains up-to-date information on all the 1,270 species found in the region, which covers Thailand, peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£4**

Birding Frontiers Challenge Series: Winter

Martin Garner

£17.99 **ONLY £16.99***

This title is exempt from free UK p&p

(+ £2 UK, £5.50 Europe, £8 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

This second instalment in the Challenge Series looks at winter identification conundrums. The inspiring narratives, key ID points and high-quality artwork and photography make each challenge as easy as possible to follow.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£1**

Robins and Chats

Peter Clement

£60 **ONLY £54.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £53.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 December

This new handbook looks at the world's 170 species of robins and chats. Discussing the identification and habits on a species-by-species basis, it brings together the latest research with accurate range maps, more than 600 colour photographs and 64 colour plates by artist Chris Rose. *Read our review on page 61.*



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£6**

Collins BTO Guide to British Birds

Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe

£19.99 **ONLY £18.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £17.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

A unique identification guide sourcing data from the *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, featuring all the birds that occur regularly in Britain and Ireland. Text and photographs describe and illustrate key features, enabling identification of tricky species.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£2**

Canary Islands II: Tenerife and La Gomera

Dirk Hilbers and Kees Woutersen

£22.95 **ONLY £21.95**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £20.95

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 December

This latest Crossbill Guide covers the two most biodiverse of the Canary Islands and contains everything you need to visit all the best sites for wildlife watching, including the endemic birds.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£2**

Finding Birds in Hungary

Dave Gosney

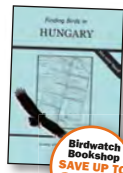
£7.50 **ONLY £6.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £6.49

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

Updated for 2015, this is the most comprehensive guide available to the best sites in Hungary. Detailed maps and directions are featured, providing everything you need in order to find species such as Saker Falcon, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Lesser Grey Shrike.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£1.50**

Inglorious

Mark Avery

£16.99 **ONLY £14.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £13.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

Presenting both sides of the divisive issue of driven grouse shooting, the author gives a fair and detailed analysis of this multi-million pound past-time, and explains why he is in favour of an outright ban. This new title is guaranteed to stir up a debate about 'field sports', the countryside and big business.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£3**

Collins BTO Guide to Rare British Birds

Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe

£24.99 **ONLY £20.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £19.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 December

In combination with its companion volume *Collins BTO Guide to British Birds* above, this new release provides a photographic reference to every species of vagrant bird that has occurred in Britain and Ireland to help you identify your own.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£5**

A Natural History of Lighthouses

John A Love

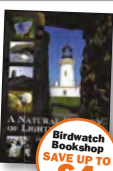
£30 **ONLY £26.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £25.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 December

As well as a fascinating history of lighthouses, this new title also highlights the contribution made by lighthouse keepers over the last two centuries to the study of natural history, including ornithology.



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£4**

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook 2016

Published by Calluna Books

£19.50 **ONLY £18.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £17.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 December

Now in its 36th year and with a new publisher, this popular Yearbook contains 328 fact-filled pages featuring everything for the birding year ahead, from checklists and tide tables to reviews and birding events. *Read our review on page 62.*



**Birdwatch
Bookshop
SAVE UP TO
£2.50**



DON'T DELAY – ORDER YOUR BOOKS POST FREE* TODAY!

Simply fill in the form below, order online at birdwatch.co.uk or call 01778 392027

We have hundreds more titles on our website – visit www.birdwatch.co.uk or email bookshop@birdwatch.co.uk for enquiries. *In the UK only

BIRDWATCH BOOKSHOP ORDER FORM

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Subscriber number _____

Email _____

Enter below details of the books you require (we offer many titles in addition to those featured here), add your personal details (as they appear on your credit/debit card statement, if paying by card) and return this form (or a photocopy) with payment to the address adjacent.

Title	Quantity
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Total enclosed (including non-UK p&p) £ _____

Payment by: ☐ Cheque (to Warners Group Publications) **OR**

☐ Please charge my credit/debit card:

Card no _____

Security code _____

Start date _____

Exp date _____

Issue no (Switch) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Please return this order form to: **Birdwatch Bookshop, Warners Group Publications, The Maltings, West Street, Bourne PE10 9PH.**

Warners Group Publications plc will automatically provide you with relevant direct mail and/or telephone information. If you do not wish to receive this information please tick here ☐. If you would like to receive relevant email information please tick here ☐. Warners Group Publications plc will occasionally allow selected third parties to contact you about their products and services. Please indicate your preferences. Please tick here if you do not want to receive relevant direct mail and/or telephone information from third parties ☐. Please tick here if you do want to receive relevant email from selected third parties ☐.



ebookguide



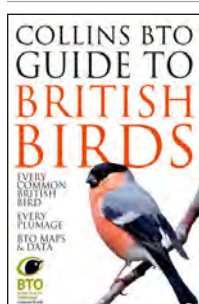
Editor's choice



**The Sound Approach to Birding:
a Guide to Understanding Bird Sound**
By Mark Constantine and The Sound Approach
RRP/Price: £14.99

This award-winning first title from The Sound Approach team has been transformed into a smart interactive ebook. Taking you on a fascinating journey, it will enable you to understand bird sound, with more than 200 high-quality recordings of mostly European species easily enjoyed with the simple tap of the screen. Suitable for birders of all experience levels, this is the must-have guide to a complex but fascinating subject – if you buy no other book on bird songs and calls, ensure you have this one in your collection.

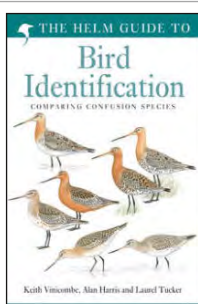
BUY



Collins BTO Guide to British Birds
By Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe
RRP/Price: £16.85

BUY

Featuring all of Britain and Ireland's regular species, this unique new identification guide is designed for use in the field, with text and photographs depicting the key features needed to identify any species with confidence.



The Helm Guide to Bird Identification
By Keith Vinicombe
**RRP: £25.00
Price: £21.99**

BUY

This best-selling ID guide looks at tricky species pairs or groups of birds, comparing and contrasting their respective features. Designed as a field companion, it supplements standard field guides and provides detailed additional information.



Birds of the Iberian Peninsula
By Eduardo de Juana and Ernest Garcia
**RRP: £60
Price: £49.99**

BUY

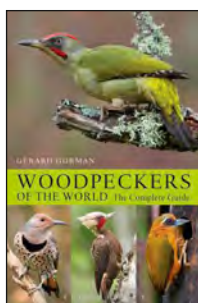
This new title is the first comprehensive guide to the avifauna of one of Europe's most ornithologically varied regions, and covers all species recorded in Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar, as well as the Berlengas and Balearic Islands.



Owls of the World: A Photographic Guide
By Heimo Mikkola
RRP/Price: £21.99

BUY

The ultimate resource dedicated to these charismatic predators, in ebook form optimised for tablets, with crisp, fully zoomable photography plus a definitive and truly comprehensive sound archive of more than 500 songs and calls.



Woodpeckers of the World: the Complete Guide
By Gerard Gorman
**RRP: £29.99
Price: £19.49**

BUY

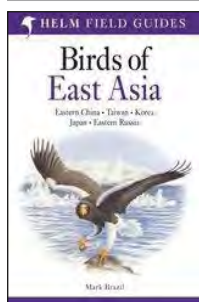
This stunning photographic guide covers all 239 species of woodpecker. The concise text looks in detail at their biology, with particular emphasis on field identification, as well as voice, habitat, status, racial variation and distribution.



The Warbler Guide
By Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle
**RRP: £23.94
Price: £15.56**

BUY

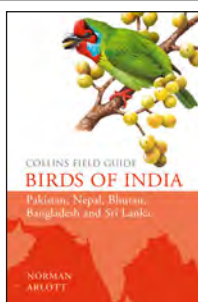
This groundbreaking guide features more than 1,000 stunning colour photos, extensive species accounts with multiple viewing angles, and an entirely new system of vocalisation analysis that helps you distinguish songs and calls.



Birds of East Asia
By Mark Brazil
RRP/Price: £19.99

BUY

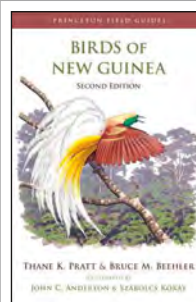
Featuring high-resolution and fully zoomable colour plates, plus comprehensive identification text and accurate range maps, this enhanced ebook also contains songs and calls, making it a truly indispensable guide for any trip to the region.



Birds of India
By Norman Arlott
**RRP: £19.99
Price: £12.99**

BUY

This attractive Collins field guide covers all bird species occurring in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands and the Maldives, with beautiful artwork and comprehensive text.



Birds of New Guinea
By Thane K Pratt and Bruce M Beehler
**RRP: £41.94
Price: £27.26**

BUY

This completely revised second edition is the only guide to cover all 780 bird species recorded in the area. With added colour plates and maps, this book also has updated text with new information on ID, voice, habits and range.

appguide



Editor's choice



Collins Bird Guide

Reimagined for iPad and iPhone, this intuitive app combines the acclaimed illustrations and species accounts of the field guide with scalable maps and vocalisations for over 700 species; there's even an optional video library. The only downside is no Android version.



Download on the **App Store** **£13.49** GET IT ON **Google play**

BIRDCGUIDES



Brought to you by the publishers of *Birdwatch*



BirdGuides

Get the latest news of scarce and rare birds from around Britain and Ireland as it breaks! With a Bird News Anywhere subscription you can also access extra details for sightings and set filters to tailor news to fit your needs, as well as submit your own sightings.

Enhanced content with subscription to Bird News Anywhere

Download on the **App Store** **Free**



Aves Vox Pro

An excellent bird sounds app which utilises Xeno-Canto's database of recordings of 80 per cent of the world's birds, and is based on the IOC species list. This pro version lets you mark and show only favourite sounds, create and search species lists, filter recordings and repeat playback.



Download on the **App Store** **£3.99** GET IT ON **Google play**



Birds of Britain and Ireland (Pro Edition)

This high-quality digital field guide covers 271 species regularly occurring in Britain and Ireland. Comprehensive information includes multiple illustrations and photos, audio recordings of songs and calls, distribution maps and detailed text from *BWP Concise*.



Download on the **App Store** **£13.49** GET IT ON **Google play**



Bird Journal

Arguably the leading cross-platform listing app, Bird Journal lets you record, explore and share your bird and wildlife observations, sync data across multiple devices and submit to BirdTrack or eBird. The premium edition is £39.99, but is a worthwhile upgrade for the many extra features. Recommended.



Download on the **App Store** **Free** GET IT ON **Google play**



Bird Songs Europe

Probably the best audio resource for Western Palearctic bird sounds, featuring 2,833 recordings of 802 species, together with spectrograms, 1,350 photos, 600 maps, Wikipedia links and the facility to create a sightings list. It's undeniably expensive, but unrivalled for use in the field.



Download on the **App Store** **£52.99** GET IT ON **Google play**



Bird Ticker

This simple but practical app is great for listing your bird sightings. The latest version now starts with a blank database, allowing users to select British, Western Palearctic or North American base lists before they start ticking. Sites visited are also linked with Google Maps. A snip at this bargain price.



Download on the **App Store** **£0.79** GET IT ON **Google play**



Birdwatcher's Diary

Fast and easy to use, this handy app allows you to note all the species you see or hear, including time and exact location, both of which are automatically recorded. You can review sightings as a list or on a Google map, upload them to eBird and do much more. Android users pay just £9.08.



Download on the **App Store** **£9.99** GET IT ON **Google play**



eGuide to Birds of the Middle East

One of the new generation of 'book apps', this eGuide features all the plates, text and maps from the Helm print edition, but with the bonus of audio recordings of 400 species and a 'Compare' facility, allowing two birds to be displayed together on the same screen.



Download on the **App Store** **£21.99** GET IT ON **Google play**



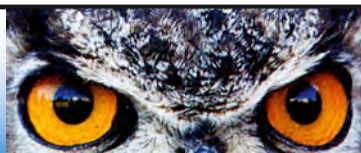
The Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America

The contents of America's leading field guide have been repurposed in this intuitive digital version, which boasts audio recordings alongside the plates, text and maps from the print edition. A listing feature lets North American users set location to filter species.



Download on the **App Store** **£14.99** GET IT ON **Google play**

For reviews of birding apps and other products, visit bit.ly/birdwatchreviews



SWAROVSKI OPTIK

SPOTTING SCOPES



ATX 65
with 25-60x
module
£2150



ATX 85
with 25-60x
module
£2610



ATX 95
with 30-70x
module
£2870

ATS/STS 65HD Body..... £1080
ATS/STS 80HD Body..... £1549
20-60x eyepiece..... £379
25-50x eyepiece..... £459

**PURCHASE AN ATS/STS SCOPE
WITH EYEPIECE AND RECEIVE
A FREE ACE STAY-ON-CASE**



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK
Premier
Dealer

**FREE ACE STAY-ON-CASE
WORTH £99 WHEN YOU
PURCHASE ANY
COMPLETE SWAROVSKI
ATX SPOTTING SCOPE**

(STX CASES COMING SOON)

SCOPE ACCESSORIES

PA-15 iPhone 5/5S Digiscoping Adapter..... £113
DCB II Digiscoping Adapter..... £270
TLS APO Digiscoping Adapter..... £362
TR2 Telescope Rail II..... £119
T2 Mount Adapter (required for TLS APO)..... £16
ATX/STX Stay-on-case (complete)..... £192
ATS/STS 65/80 Stay-on-case..... £179
AT101 Tripod w/ DH101 Head..... £369
CT101 Tripod Legs..... £290
CT Travel Tripod Legs..... £285
CT101 Tripod w/ DH101 Head..... £529
CT Travel Tripod w/ DH101 Head..... £499
DH101 Head..... £239

**FREE CLEANING KIT WITH ALL SWAROVSKI
FULL-SIZE BINOCULARS & SCOPES**

SLC



8x42 SLC..... £1179
10x42 SLC..... £1245
8x56 SLC..... £1475
10x56 SLC..... £1520
15x56 SLC..... £1565

**Free Swarovski watch
worth £50 with the
purchase of new
Swarovski
EL FieldPro
Binoculars***

*While Stocks Last

8x42 EL RANGE..... £2195
10x42 EL RANGE..... £2270
8x30 CL Companion..... £765
10x30 CL Companion..... £785
8x25 CL Pocket..... £505
10x25 CL Pocket..... £540

EL SWAROVISION FIELDPRO



Optical Quality: Redefined

- Fluorite-containing HD lenses
- Maximum detail recognition
- Perfect image & handling
- FieldPro Accessory Range

**FREE SET OF AVIAN EYESHIELD
WINGED EYECUPS WITH ALL ELs**

EL 32 Swarovision
8x32 EL.. £1475
10x32 EL.. £1495
EL 42 Swarovision
8.5x42 EL.. £1800
10x42 EL.. £1820
EL 50 Swarovision
10x50 EL.. £1935
12x50 EL.. £1955

Kowa

Scopes & Packages

883 & 30xW..... £2099
601/602 Body..... £469
601/602 & 30xW..... £698
601/602 & 20-60x..... £768
661/662 Body..... £569
661/662 & 30xW..... £788
661/662 & 20-60x..... £858
663/664 Body..... £899
663/664 & 30xW..... £1118
663/664 & 20-60x..... £1198
773/774 Body..... £1629
82SV Body..... £669
82SV & 30xW..... £888
82SV & 20-60x..... £958

601 Bundle: 20-60x & SoC..... £649

Eyepieces

TE-17W 30xW for 77/88..... £319
TE-11WZ 25-60xW for 77/88..... £669
TSE-14WD 30xW for 60/66/82..... £229
TSE-Z9B 20-60x for 60/66/82..... £299

Binoculars

8x33 Genesis..... £899
10x33 Genesis..... £949
8.5x44 Genesis..... £999
10x44 Genesis..... £1049
8x25 BD..... £209
10x25 BD..... £229

TSN-883/884 BUNDLE

- TSN-883/884 scope body
- TSE-14WD 25-60xW eyepiece
- C-881 Stay-on-Case



Only £2249 - Save £348!

BINOCULARS

**Kowa
Specialist
Dealer**

SV

8x25..... £83
10x25..... £90



BD XD

8x32..... £309
8x42..... £449
10x42..... £479



Canon



**Full image stabilised
binocular range now in stock!**

8x25 IS..... £265
10x30 IS..... £335
12x36 IS II..... £579
15x50 IS..... £879
18x50 IS..... £999
10x42 L IS..... £1279

ZEISS

Victory 8x42 SF..... £1845
Victory 10x42 SF..... £1869
Victory 8x42 HT..... £1429
Victory 10x42 HT..... £1449
Conquest 8x32 HD..... £589
Conquest 10x32 HD..... £599
Conquest 8x42 HD..... £699
Conquest 10x42 HD..... £729
Conquest 8x20..... £319
Conquest 10x25..... £339



**ZEISS
Authorised
Dealer**

AVIAN EYESHIELD



New Winged Eyecup

New single eyecup suitable for scope eyepieces from 40mm Ø upwards. Formed from an extremely flexible & durable material, the winged eyecup is a little accessory that will make a big difference to your viewing enjoyment

ONLY £11.50
FREE UK POSTAGE

AVIAN EYESHIELD WINGED EYECUPS

"It should be
illegal to sell
binos without
these!"
S McAfee



**COMPACT OR STANDARD SIZE
ONLY £17.50**
FREE UK POSTAGE

The Avian EyeShields are made of flexible rubber & fit most types of binocular. They cradle your eyes, cutting out ambient light & significantly improve your viewing experience. They also protect against wind, dust, rain & snow and can be folded down when not in use.

MINOX



BL 8x33 HD.....	£369
BL 8x44 HD.....	£389
BL 10x44 HD.....	£389
BL 8x52 HD.....	£449
BL 10x52 HD.....	£449
BL 8x56.....	£585
BL 15x56.....	£645

High Grade

8.5x52 HG.....	£949
10x52 HG.....	£879
8x56 HG.....	£849

BV Series

8x25 BV.....	£129
10x25 BV.....	£129
8x42 BV.....	£169
10x42 BV.....	£189

**High Grade
SPECIAL OFFER
LIMITED STOCK**

8x33 HG.....R.R.P. £945 - NOW	£499
8x43 HG.....R.R.P. £969 - NOW	£599
10x43 HG.....R.R.P. £995 - NOW	£699



Leica
Premier
Dealer

Televid Spotting Scope



- High definition & contrast
- Colour fringe free
- AquaDura lens coating
- Close focus from 3.2 metres
- Rich detail - dawn to dusk

APO Televid 82 Angled & 25-50x WW Eyepiece£2699

APO Televid 65 Angled & 25-50x WW Eyepiece£2199

1.8x Extender for APO Televid

Spotting Scopes£320

Leica Stay-on Case£155

Ultravid HD/HD+ Binoculars



FREE
LOWEPRO BAG
OR £50
VOUCHER

- Precision high-performance lenses
- Improved prism coating
- AquaDura easy-clean coating
- Shock-absorbent rubber armour

Ultravid 8x32 HD+£1279

Ultravid 10x32 HD+£1289

Ultravid 7x42 HD+£1389

Ultravid 8x42 HD+£1439

Ultravid 10x42 HD+£1489

Ultravid 8x50 HD+£1479

Ultravid 10x50 HD+£1539

Ultravid 12x50 HD+£1639



Trinovid 42
The ideal universal binos. Compact size. Bright with high contrast. Eye-strain free.

Trinovid 8x42£1039

Trinovid 10x42£1089

Compact Binoculars & Monoculars

Ultravid 8x20 BR£529

Ultravid 10x25 BR£559

Trinovid 8x20 BCA£359

Trinovid 10x25 BCA£389

Monovid 8x20 black.....£349

Monovid 8x20 red.....£379

Monovid 8x20 silver.....£389



Purchase any model of Leica Ultravid HD-Plus & receive free of charge a Lowepro Tahoe backpack (RRP £52) or a £50 voucher to spend in-store.

The Tahoe is rugged but lightweight & can be used as a daypack as well as being ideal for your camera & binocular kit.

Available while stocks last



Stay On Cases

Kowa TSN 1/3.....	£69
Leica Televid 62 Angled.....	£80
Leica Televid 77 Angled.....	£80
Swarovski ATS/ATM 65 & 80.....	£80
Swarovski ATX 65/85/95.....	£99

We stock a wide range of cameras suitable for wildlife photography - visit our website to see the full range



Panasonic DMC-TZ70£279



Canon EOS 1200D From £259



Leica V-Lux£849



Panasonic DMC-FZ330£499

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS



^ Winged Eyecups
From £11.50



^ Blower Brush
Only £6.99



Universal Charger >
Only £34.99



< Swarovski Cleaning Kit
Only £32



Bino Harness ^
Only £12.99

v Lenspen
Only £12



^ Microfibre Lens Cloth
Only £5



^ Comfort Tripod Strap
Only £20

AVIAN F MAGNESIUM

With the third generation of Avian's premier binocular, features which established the model as a top quality competitively priced optic have been further refined.

Super sharp optics deliver crystal clear clarity over a wide range of conditions. Aspherical lens elements & flat field coating ensure performance is held from centre to edge.

If you're after high performance at a low price, look no further.

8x32£369

7x42£379

10x42£399



LITE OPEN-BRIDGE

Open-bridge design
Compact.
Wide field of view.

10x50£189



LITE

Small enough for your pocket, yet large enough for super performance.

8x28.....£169



10x28 ..£189

ED82 MAGNESIUM

Our premium scope. Full range of accessories on our website.

ED82 & 30xW£599



MULTIVIEW 80

Variable angle between 0-90°. 9.5/10 in Bird Watching review.



MV80 & 20-60x£339

Explore Dorset's wild places Discovery Tour

Join RSPB staff from **11-13 January 2016** for an exclusive three-day wildlife tour, visiting the best places for birdlife in Dorset, including some hot-spots not open to the public. You'll be led by experts who work at and survey the sites you'll be visiting.

£350 per person

Accommodation not included. Discounted rates available.

For more details or to book, visit birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk or e-mail robert.farrington@rspb.org.uk or call **07725 574793**



The One Stop
NatureShop
bringing wildlife closer



Kite Lynx 8x30

Winner Best "Compact" Binocular 2014



Skua cases
Scopac Plus
Second hand
Part exchange
Commission sales
on Optics & Cameras



Order on-line or visit us in Norfolk at Dalegate Market
Burnham Deepdale, PE31 8FB
between Wells-next-the-sea and Titchwell
Open 7 days a week 10am - 5pm Tel 01485 211223
email:- sales@onestopnature.co.uk
www.onestopnature.co.uk



Discovery Tours are a partnership between the RSPB and the Birds of Poole Harbour charity.

Birds of Poole Harbour



The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654. 870-1484-15-16

THE BIRDERS STORE

www.birders-store.co.uk

We stock one of the largest ranges of birding optics and accessories for all budgets including: BARR & STROUD, CELESTRON, COUNTRY INNOVATION, CULLMANN, HAWKE, HELIOS, KITE, KOWA, LEICA, MEADE, MINOX, OPTECH, OPTICRON, STEINER, SWAROVSKI, TILLEY HATS, VANGUARD, VELBON, VIKING, VORTEX & ZEISS, together with a large range of books and DVDs

7 King Charles Place, St Johns, Worcester WR2 5AJ • Tel: 01905 312877 • Email: sales@birders-store.co.uk • Open: Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am - 4.30pm



NEW Crossfire
8x42 & 10x42 from £145



Razor HD 50mm Spotting Scope £599
with **FREE** Cullmann 460 Travel tripod worth £79.99



Viper HD 8x32 £459 with **FREE** Vortex Solo 8x25 Monocular worth £45



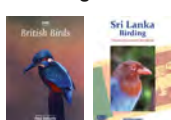
NEW Savanna R



8x33 and 10x33 from £113



Birding DVDs



Large range by Birdguides, Dave Gosney, Malcolm Rymer, Paul Doherty, Roy Harvey, Scilly Pelagics & Steve Evans



NEW Ultravid HD Plus from £1,279



Endeavor ED II from £319.99

Smartphone Adapters



We stock an extensive range by Novagrade, Opticron, PhoneScope, Swarovski & Viking



CL Pocket from £505



SLC from £1,179



NEW EL FieldPro from £1,475



ATX & STX Scopes from £2,150



Lynx HD 8x30 £459
10x30 £469



Toucan 8x42, 10x42 £299



NEW Bonelli 2.0 8x42, 10x42 from £949

FREE Birdguides British Birds DVD 270 species edition worth £25 with all Kite Optics binoculars



NEW Endurance ED 8x42 & 10x42 from £167.99



NEW Frontier ED 8x42 & 10x42 from £214.99



Sapphire ED 8x42 £319.99
10x42 £329.99



FREE binocular harness offer worth £55 on all model ranges below



Victory SF from £1825

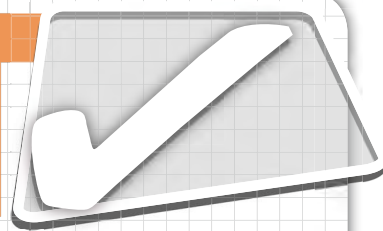


Victory HT from £1425



Conquest HD from £599

EXPERT ADVICE



THIS MONTH'S EXPERT PANEL



DOMINIC MITCHELL is Birdwatch's founder and Managing Editor, and author and editor of several bird books. He has been birding for more than 40 years.



DAVID CALLAHAN Prior to joining Birdwatch as staff writer, David trained as a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum.



CHRIS HARBARD After many years at the RSPB, Chris is now a tour leader, writer and editor, dividing his time between Britain and the USA.



JOSH JONES is well known as BirdGuides' News Team Manager. He has been obsessed by all things birdy since he was a toddler.



BILL CLARK is a leading authority on raptor identification and taxonomy. He is the author of more than 100 papers and books on birds of prey.



ROB HUME began watching birds as a child. He worked for the RSPB for many years and has written several books, including one on jizz.

The best tips, advice and more
www.birdwatch.co.uk



68How to ... Poetry in motion – study the movements of mixed flocks of waders to learn more about jizz.

68Out for a duck Find out more about the differences between diving and dabbling ducks.

70Your questions answered Our team of experts tackles more of your avian conundrums.

72News New State of the UK's Birds report shows the mixed fortunes of Britain's birds.

72Listcheck Spotted Flycatcher forms could be full species, but more research is needed.

72High tides Check out the best times to visit a local wader roost with this handy Sunday high tide guide.

IN THE FIELD

A shore thing

TAKING part in a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) survey is an excellent way to make the most of the time you spend in the field, as well as contribute important data to the organisation's growing body of information. This is then used to monitor changes in bird populations and help conserve

our declining species.

The third Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS) is taking place this winter. It aims to count the birds and other wildlife found along those coastal areas that do not already form part of the long-running Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). Such shoreline areas may

contain species such as Turnstone or Purple Sandpiper, which have been typically under-recorded in the past.

NEWS starts on 1 December 2015 and continues until 31 January 2016. To facilitate it, the British coastline has been divided into sectors, some of which are marked as priority, each being 2 km in length. Each section need only be counted once. To find out more go to **bit.ly/bw282NEWSurvey**. Previous

BTO counters can use their existing login, while anyone new to BTO surveying will need to register.

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) offers another winter surveying opportunity. It monitors waterbirds (wildfowl, waders and other wetland species) outside the breeding season and focuses on both inland and coastal wetland sites, from freshwater lakes to estuaries. As well as the core counts that take place monthly there is also a separate Low Tide Count. This survey involves more regular monthly counts across Britain on set dates. See **www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs** for more information.

If you don't want to take part in an organised survey, remember that you can also make your birding count by reporting your sightings to BirdGuides (**www.birdguides.com**), which automatically feeds records into the BTO's BirdTrack database. ➤

Typically under-recorded in previous surveys, your counts for Turnstone could provide important population data for this numerous though declining species.



ROBIN CHITTENDEN (WWW.ROBINCHITTENDEN.CO.UK)

HOW TO ...

Bird by jizz



They sprint eight feet and stop. Like that. They sprintayard (like that) and stop.

They have no acceleration and no brakes.

Top speed's their only one.

NORMAN MacCaig's 1972 poem captures the character of Ringed Plover to perfection. Perhaps you need to be a poet to get jizz into words. Out on the shoreline, especially if the tide is out and you look along glistening creeks or across vast expanses of gleaming mud, jizz comes into its own. A few birds will sprint eight feet and stop – just 'like that'. Others will simply bend over and plod, or scuttle, or skitter about, or walk this way and that while stitching and probing

with their bills. The first – the 'run and stoppers' – will be plovers.

Plovers have short bills and need to stop and tilt forward to pick food from the surface of the mud or sand. This is a good way to tell if some distant dark shapes are Grey Plovers, rather than Common Redshanks, Knots or Bar-tailed Godwits.

On the pages of a field guide it looks so obvious, but out in the field everything tends to look dark on shiny mud (although once the sun comes out and illuminates the bird, perhaps on dry, light sand, suddenly Grey Plovers look very pale grey). You might see individual shapes of feeding Grey Plovers, which tend to hold little territories, whereas the godwits and Knot cluster together even at low tide.

There are smaller, forward-leaning Dunlins and more energetic groups of Sanderlings, different in their behaviour even on the flat openness of sand and silt, away from the rippling waves' edge where they feed most typically in their clockwork-mouse runs.

Common Redshanks plod and probe; bigger Greenshanks are often even more motionless, although in shallow water they can do a fair imitation of the rushes and sudden darts of Spotted Redshank. A group of Spotted Redshanks in a shallow, flowing creek manages a level of frenetic activity – swimming, up-ending, lurching about – that other waders rarely match.

Having lived far inland, I learned my waders when I spent a few years in Swansea, long ago, on the beach of Swansea Bay and the wonderful marshes and estuaries of Gower. Youthful arrogance (I wish I had some now!) meant I took too

little time to learn from the likes of Bob Howells, wader-counter beyond compare, who must have used jizz all the time, quite unthinkingly while monitoring thousands of birds around Gower almost day by day.

Distant flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits roosting in lines, heads back, chests out, paler and browner than the lines of Grey Plovers, smaller and more angular than the big, brown, lumpy sleeping Eurasian Curlews, bigger, paler, longer-bodied than the Common Redshanks. Dense packs of small stuff: drab Dunlins drizzled with lines of sparkling grey Sanderlings, rotund Ringed Plovers, Turnstones that could never quite keep still even around the edges of the high tide roost.

Great stuff, great times and what a fine education. I would like to go back and talk to Bob about it now, and admire the poetry of the beach-top waders and the abundance of jizz on display.

Rob Hume

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Ducking and diving

VISIT any lake, reservoir or gravel pit at this time of year and you will see ducks. Large numbers migrate to Britain from northern and central Europe to join our resident species.

The dabbling ducks all fall within the genus *Anas* (apart from Mandarin) and feed at the surface

of the water. Diving ducks can be split into the genus *Aythya*, goldeneyes, seaducks (eiders, scoters and Long-tailed Duck), mergansers and stiff-tails. These feed by totally submerging and swimming down below the surface.

When you next look at a Mallard, consider how it differs from a

Tufted Duck – not the obvious plumage differences, but rather the structural and behavioural differences that distinguish dabbling from diving ducks.

Body shape and wings

Dabbling ducks have long bodies and sit high on the water, making

paddling along easier. Diving ducks are shorter and more compact, sitting lower, ready to dive down at a moment's notice.

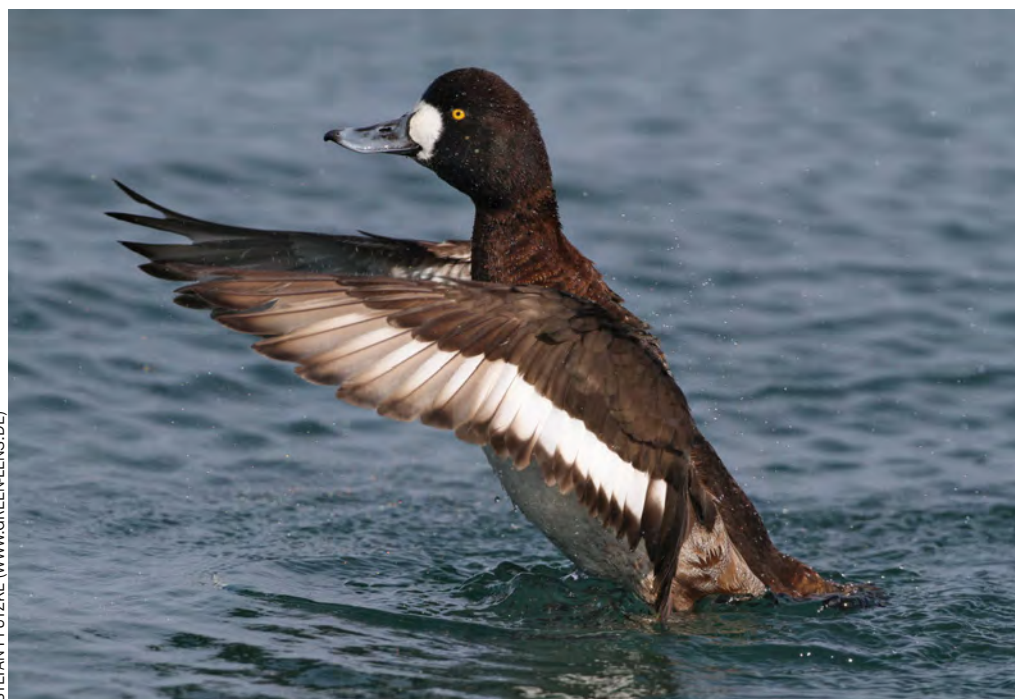
Dabbling ducks have long wings that enable them to fly straight up from the water's surface if there is danger, while the shorter wings of diving ducks mean they have to flap hard and run along the surface of the water to become airborne. Eiders use their wings underwater more than other diving ducks. While the tail of a dabbling duck is used as an aerial rudder, that of a diving duck is smaller and helps it to steer underwater.

Beaks

Dabbling ducks have relatively flat and broad beaks, with a round tip, and many of them have comb-like sieves formed by lamellae along on the edge of the upper and lower mandibles; these strain out food particles. Mallard have about 40-50 lamellae on the upper mandible and 70-80 on the lower, while Northern Shoveler has 180 lamellae on the upper and 220 on the lower.

Vegetation feeders such as Mallard and Gadwall have broad flat beaks, while narrower, stouter bills indicate seed and grain feeders, like Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal.

Among the diving ducks, Greater Scaup and Common Pochard have more typical duck beaks as they feed on



STEFAN PFÜTZKE (WWW.GREEN-LENS.DE)

As with most diving ducks, Greater Scaup has proportionately short wings, making it difficult for the species to take off from the water. These birds have to flap hard and run along the surface of the water to become airborne.



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

Next time you're viewing a mixed wader flock, try separating the species by looking at their different behaviour, shapes and sizes. Can you pick out the Sanderlings, Common Redshanks, Dunlins and Turnstones from each other in this photo?

invertebrates and vegetation while scoters and eiders have larger, stout bills for feeding on shellfish and crustaceans. Mergansers are known as sawbills as they have serrated edges to their bills which enable them to grip onto slippery fish.

Feet

Diving ducks have the usual webbed toes of all ducks, but their feet are larger than those of dabbling ducks, with skin flaps along the edges of the outer toes as well as a lobe of skin on their hind toe to give extra resistance to the water when diving.

The legs of diving ducks are situated wide apart and well to the rear of the body, helping them to propel themselves down to depths, as well as to feed with head down while paddling. This makes it difficult for them to walk on land. Dabbling ducks have feet more centrally placed on their underside, which helps them paddle along the surface easily, as well as walk on land.

Feeding behaviour

Dabbling ducks feed by 'up-ending' or grazing and only occasionally submerge completely, and then only in a shallow dive, spending little time underwater. When diving ducks feed, they start their dive by rising out of the water, arching their backs, and then entering the water head first, using both wings

and feet to propel themselves downwards.

Common Pochard and Greater Scaup may dive to 10-15 feet and Tufted Duck to 20 feet, while Long-tailed Duck may reach 60 feet (with a maximum of 200 feet). A dive may last up to 30 seconds, with most of the time spent travelling to and from the feeding area. Some diving ducks may occasionally up-end for food when in shallow water.

Physiology

Diving ducks have relatively large hearts. When diving, a bird lowers its heart rate and reduces its oxygen consumption, thereby limiting the amount of air needed and lowering its buoyancy. Ducks have air sacs connected to their lungs which can be deflated or inflated; Long-tailed ducks expel most of the air from their air sacs before diving.

Seaducks, which feed in a saline environment, need to excrete salt with their appropriately enlarged kidneys, as well as special salt glands located above the eye, which give rise to the 'lumpy' beaks of eiders and scoters. A Common Eider typically ingests 50 g of salt a day and will get rid of any within 25 minutes of feeding.

The eyes of diving ducks have a strong iris muscle which helps them to see underwater, and the nictitating membrane of mergansers has a clear 'window' in it for close focusing. ■

AVIANTOURS

BIRDWATCHING | PHOTOGRAPHY | RAMBLES

GIBRALTAR | SPAIN | MOROCCO

Extremadura - Donana - Strait of Gibraltar



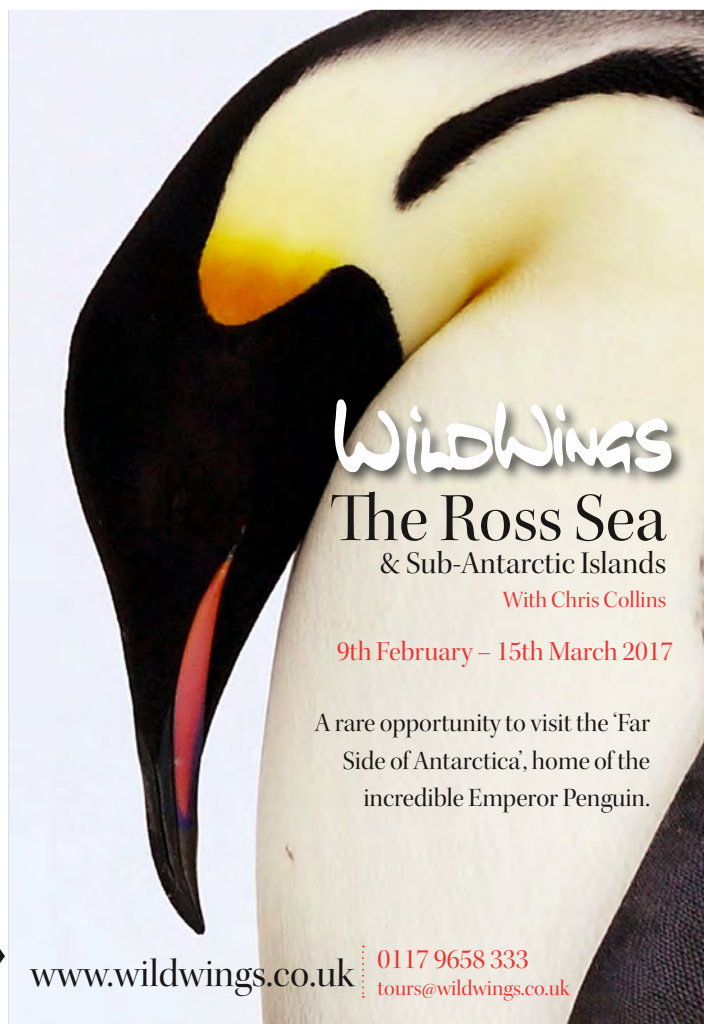
EXPERIENCE AMAZING BIRDS, SCENERY & FOOD!

Personalised itineraries to find the birds you want
Bird hide photography for many iberian species
Experience spectacular bird of prey migration
Small private or group tours for a more relaxed experience

MORE INFO ON OUR WEBSITE

info@aviantours.net
www.aviantours.net

RECOMENDED BY  **tripadvisor**



WildWings
The Ross Sea
& Sub-Antarctic Islands
With Chris Collins
9th February – 15th March 2017

A rare opportunity to visit the 'Far Side of Antarctica', home of the incredible Emperor Penguin.

www.wildwings.co.uk 0117 9658 333
tours@wildwings.co.uk

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q I thought it might be an interesting and enjoyable challenge for your readers to try to identify the bird species from this selection of feathers, which



I found as remains – plucked by a predator – a few yards behind a cliff-top on the south coast, about a mile away from the well-known migration hot-spot of Beachy Head, East Sussex, on 18 October. Some of the feathers are perhaps a little misleading, and I've had some interesting suggestions! The bird is a common autumn migrant, and may even possibly be identified to subspecies level from these few feathers.

Alan Pearson, via email

A Can any readers hazard a guess as to the original owner of these feathers? There should be enough in the photo to go on, so please let us know and we'll reveal the answer next month. ■

Q I am an avid reader of your magazine every month. I photographed the bird below in a pine tree in Ile de Re, La Rochelle, France. Can you tell me if it a Melodious Warbler or a Wood Warbler?

Luca Robinson, via email

A Josh Jones of BirdGuides.com replies: "Although the extensive yellowish tones of this bird – as well as its location – might well suggest Melodious Warbler, this bird is in fact not a *Hippolais* warbler but a *Phylloscopus*.

Structurally the bill is quite short and looks rather lightweight, as well as being predominately dark in coloration – Melodious Warbler would show a large, broad and more extensively pale-based bill. This bird also shows a strong, contrasting supercilium, extending well behind the eye, which favours either Common Chiffchaff or Willow Warbler over the plainer, more 'open' face of a typical *Hippolais* warbler such as Melodious.

Juveniles of both Common Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler can be really quite yellow, particularly early in the season when their plumage is fresh. Though the legs look quite dark, the overall appearance and plumage tones indicate that your bird is a Willow Warbler; while it's difficult to judge confidently, the primary projection also looks quite long – which also fits with the diagnosis as Willow." ■



CONSERVATION

Wood for the trees

BRITAIN'S woods and forests support a huge amount of wildlife, providing food and shelter for a variety of birds, insects and mammals. These important ecosystems need to be protected, and the Woodland Trust is Britain's largest woodland conservation charity.

The organisation protects and restores our woods and fights to save those under threat. It creates new native woodland across the country and inspires people to visit woods, plant trees and treasure wildlife.

You can support the work of the Woodland Trust by dedicating a tree or area of woodland. Dedications are available in woods all over the UK and range from single trees to acre groves. Each dedication is free to visit at any time and comes with a personalised certificate and information about your chosen wood.

To dedicate for yourself or give someone a gift that helps UK woodland and wildlife, go to www.woodlandtrustshop.com/birdwatch. ■

O I'm puzzled by the picture of a supposed Northern Harrier (aka 'Marsh Hawk') that appeared in your November issue (page 5), having been photographed on North Ronaldsay, Orkney. Northern Harrier is closely related to Hen Harrier and during migration is capable of reaching the north-eastern states of the USA. It is therefore extremely doubtful that this bird was a 'true' Northern Harrier, and is more likely to have been a Hen Harrier in moult or winter plumage. A reference can be taken from the excellent *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* by Leslie Brown and Dean Amadon (1968), where it states that Northern Harriers "do not cross oceans". I would be willing to be proved wrong, so more information please. *Brian Dowling, Leicestershire*

A David Callahan replies: "While Northern Harrier is indeed very similar to Hen Harrier, it can be identified in the field with care, and has occurred in Britain on six occasions. It has also been documented on the Azores, Faroe Islands and in Ireland, and its occurrence here is now established fact.

Second-year (sub-adult) male Northern Harriers such as the North Ronaldsay bird are perhaps the most distinctive, having rufous spotting (not streaking) on the underparts (especially on the breast, flanks and underwings); five black primary tips (Hen Harrier has six 'fingers' and more extensive black on the wing-tip); a broader dark trailing edge to the hindwing (more restricted to the secondaries); and a rufous-tinged ventral side to the hood. The darker grey upperwing possesses two thin wing-bars, and the white rump is more prominent.

The traditional idea that large raptors do not cross oceans has been disproved on numerous occasions, though in the case of some long crossings, birds may rest on ships. ■

The sub-adult male Northern Harrier on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 24 September 2015 – the bird was still present in early November.



GEORGE GAY

O My colleagues and I would be grateful for your help in identifying the bird shown below. The photo was taken at Spurn, East Yorkshire, in mid-September. We think the bird might be a first year Red-breasted Flycatcher.

Neil Anderson, via email

A David Callahan replies: "Though clearly a *Ficedula* flycatcher, I hope it doesn't disappoint you too much that it is actually a Pied Flycatcher.

The thick white edges to the tertials, single white wing-bar at the edge of the greater coverts and the white indentation at the neck all exclude Red-breasted and fit Pied Flycatcher perfectly." ■



Have you got a question for our experts?

Send your queries to us via social media at

[www.twitter.com/BirdwatchExtra](https://twitter.com/BirdwatchExtra) or

www.facebook.com/birdwatchmagazine, on our

forums at www.birdwatch.co.uk/forums, or by emailing editorial@birdwatch.co.uk or by writing

in to: **Your Questions Answered, Birdwatch, The Chocolate Factory, 5 Clarendon Road, London N22 6XJ.**

Limosa

30 Years of Guided Birding & Wildlife Tours

Our expert guides make all the difference

All-inclusive small group birdwatching tours to more than 100 destinations worldwide

Ask for our 2016 Brochure or visit us on the web!



Limosa
West End Farmhouse
Chapelfield, Stalham
Norfolk NR12 9EJ

limosaholidays.co.uk 01692 580 623
info@limosaholidays.co.uk

Focalpoint Optics

www.fpoint.co.uk

Set in beautiful Cheshire countryside with excellent viewing facilities and ample parking.

Marbury House Farm,
Bentleys Farm Lane
Higher Whitley,
Warrington,
WA4 4QW

Binocular
&
Telescope
Specialist

Placed by
The Paul Brownlee

Telephone 01925 730399

Mon-Fri 9.30 - 4.30

Sat 10.00 - 4.00

Call for latest offers

SWAROVSKI
OPTIK



Swarovski ATX

opticon



Opticron MM3



Leica Ultravid HD
Plus



Zeiss Victory
SF

State of the UK's birds

WILDLIFE NGOs partnered with farmers, supermarkets and even the brewing industry have had positive impacts on bird populations in Britain, according to the recently published *State of the UK's Birds 2015* report. The nation's large numbers of volunteers were also credited.

The annual report shows that farmland birds in particular, which have declined by 54 per cent since 1970, have been helped by collaborative partnerships and agri-environment schemes, notably via targeted species recovery programmes for Cirl

Bunting, Stone-curlew, Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer.

In wetlands, Common Redshank and Northern Lapwing have responded well to habitat restoration and management in the Greater Thames estuary region, while Bittern in Somerset and Eurasian Curlew in Northern Ireland have made significant steps towards recovery.

In upland areas, Black Grouse populations have increased on sites in North Wales, Gelltsdale and Scotland.

• bit.ly/bw282stateUKbirds

Cirl Bunting has undergone an upturn in its fortunes with the help of alliances between businesses and the RSPB.



ANDY HAY (WWW.RSPB-IMAGES.COM)



News round-up

MAIN STORY Government backtracks on

fracking SSSI sites

The government recently announced a first step towards banning fracking from Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

• bit.ly/bw282SSSIfrack

BirdLife searches for missing moorhen

Makira Moorhen was last recorded in 1953, but BirdLife is now conducting an extensive

search for the Solomon Islands species, which has been reported by hunters recently.

• bit.ly/bw282moorhen

Scotland clamps down on illegal pest control and raptor persecution

Scottish Natural Heritage has introduced General Licence restrictions in areas of confirmed wildlife crime, after four grouse moors came under suspicion of illegally killing raptors.

• bit.ly/bw282scotraptors

LISTCHECK

Updating avian taxonomy



FAMILIAR SPECIES TO BE SPLIT?

TWO subspecies of two familiar species of European bird, both in the chat and flycatcher family Muscicapidae, have been mooted as potential splits in recent papers, possibly adding to the numbers of Mediterranean and North Atlantic island endemics in the region.

Two cryptic subspecies have been

analysed by researchers:

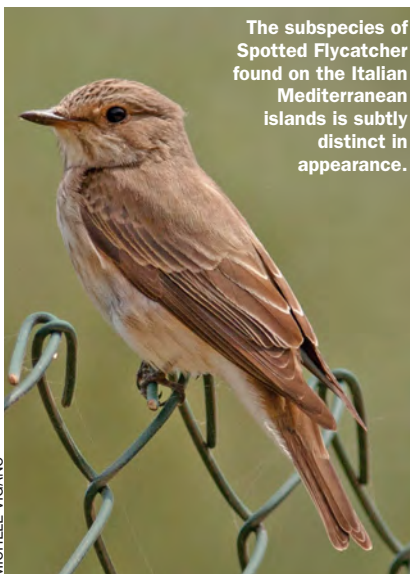
an already described form of Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* from Corsica, Sardinia and the Tuscan archipelago, and a formerly unsuspected form of Robin *Erithacus rubecula* from Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands, previously included in the subspecies *E r superbus*, which occurs on Tenerife.

M s tyrrhenica – which has not been given an English name – is paler and warmer in colour, with less streaking on the underparts and a shorter primary projection. The authors flirt with the idea of it being a full species, but say that further research is necessary.

E r marionae – ‘Gran Canaria Robin’ – is smaller and has a substantial genetic difference of 3.7 per cent from *E r superbus*, but again requires further work on DNA and vocalisations. ■

• bit.ly/bw282robinfly

The subspecies of Spotted Flycatcher found on the Italian Mediterranean islands is subtly distinct in appearance.



MICHELE VIGANO

REFERENCES

- Dietzen, C, Michels, J P and Wink, M. 2015. Formal description of a New Subspecies of the European Robin from Gran Canaria Island, Spain (Aves: Muscicapidae: *Erithacus rubecula marionae* subsp. nov.). *The Open Ornithology Journal* 8: 39-42.
- Viganò, M, and Corso, A. 2015. Morphological differences between two subspecies of Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (Pallas, 1764) (Passeriformes Muscicapidae). *Biodiversity Journal* 6: 271-284.

SUNDAY HIGH TIDES IN DECEMBER

Full moon date is Tuesday 25 December

	6th	13th	20th	27th
Exe Estuary (Starcross)	02.25	07.48	01.03	07.51
Devon	14.47	20.10	13.31	20.14
Poole Harbour (town quay)	06.06	09.53	04.41	09.57
Dorset	17.56	22.27	16.39	22.33
Langstone Harbour (Northney)	07.45	00.28	06.28	00.30
Hampshire	20.13	12.39	19.00	12.42
Thames Estuary (Sheerness)	08.13	01.20	07.06	01.23
Kent	20.56	13.42	19.50	13.47
London Bridge	09.23	02.38	08.17	02.40
Greater London	22.08	15.00	21.00	15.04
Colne Estuary (Wivenhoe)	07.54	00.57	06.42	00.59
Essex	20.39	13.16	19.28	13.20
Blakeney Harbour	02.39	07.33	01.14	07.35
Norfolk	15.17	19.52	13.55	19.55
Hunstanton	02.05	07.17	00.41	07.21
Norfolk	14.57	19.33	13.34	19.37
Blacktoft	02.37	07.40	01.15	07.43
Yorkshire	15.18	19.59	13.56	20.02

	6th	13th	20th	27th
Teesmouth	–	04.32	10.51	04.36
Durham/Yorkshire	12.12	16.46	23.09	16.50
Holy Island	10.35	03.19	09.17	03.23
Northumberland	22.58	15.34	21.47	15.38
Firth of Forth (Cockenzie)	11.03	03.37	09.45	03.42
Lothian	23.13	15.51	22.05	15.56
Morecambe Bay	07.30	–	06.07	–
Lancashire	19.50	12.17	18.36	12.20
Dee Estuary (Hilbre)	07.12	11.53	05.47	11.56
Cheshire	19.30	–	18.15	–
Loughor Estuary (Burry Port)	02.20	07.11	00.52	07.15
Carmarthenshire	14.47	19.31	13.28	19.36
Severn Estuary (Berkeley)	03.45	08.51	02.19	08.53
Gloucestershire	16.16	21.11	14.54	21.14
Belfast	07.15	–	06.00	–
Co Down	19.22	12.04	18.17	12.07
Dublin (North Wall)	07.52	00.24	06.38	00.29
Co Dublin	20.01	12.39	18.57	12.44

Buy six issues of *Birdwatch* and get six issues **FREE!**



Subscribe today for
£19.99
 on direct debit – pay
 for only six issues
 and get six **FREE***

PLUS

You get every issue
 delivered direct to your
 door each month!

***Terms and conditions.** UK orders only. After your first direct debit payment and you have received 12 issues your subscription will step up to £19.99 every six months unless you are notified otherwise. You will not receive a renewal reminder and the direct debit payments will continue to be taken unless you tell us otherwise.

SUBSCRIBE NOW



Call our hotline on **01778 392027**
 quoting the code BIRD/DEC15



Subscribe with these offers online
 at **www.birdwatch.co.uk**

ACCOMMODATION - UK

NORFOLK

NORTH NORFOLK COAST

Cosy flint and brick cottage, sleeps 5 in quiet village location within walking distance to local pub. Tastefully decorated with all modern amenities including wi-fi. Lovely large secluded garden. Perfectly located for bird watching, 15 minutes to



North Norfolk Coast. Well behaved pets welcome.

For more details please contact Paul on 07976 350684 or Lorraine on 07795 574463

North Norfolk Coast Crabpot Cottage, East Runton

A stunning 3 bedroom cottage (sleeps 6) a short stroll from East Runton's sandy beach. Perfect base for birdwatchers and walkers. Close to Cley, Salthouse, and Sheringham. Free Wi-Fi and newly refurbished.

For more information please call: 07827 225794 www.norfolk-coastal-cottages.co.uk

North Norfolk coast



The perfect birding retreat

Fully restored cottage in picturesque Kelling, sleeps 7. Large garden adjoining open countryside, off-road parking, satellite TV. Superb birding - minutes to beach, Kelling Water Meadows and Kelling Heath, close Salthouse, Cley and Sheringham for waders, rarities and seawatching, easy access Broad, Blakeney Point, Titchwell RSPB. Telephone:

07906 603382

and ask about Sea View Cottage, Kelling, or visit <http://bit.ly/NorfolkSeaView>

SCOTLAND

Outer Hebrides

Go on, treat yourself! Stay in a beautiful renovated cottage on the stunning west coast of the Isle of Lewis and enjoy a birdwatchers' paradise. 01851 710559

www.roagsendcottage.co.uk

Isle of Mull

Luxury s/c cottages near Iona ferry. En-suite B&B also available. Birdwatcher's paradise - Golden and Sea Eagles, Cormorants, Hen Harriers, Puffins. Off-season offers available.

Tel: 01681 700260

www.isleofmullholidays.com

TRAVEL

Birding Ecotours

Custom-made & Set Itinerary Birding Adventures on all Continents

info@birdingecotours.co.za www.birdingecotours.co.za

To advertise here please call Ian Lycett on 020 8881 0550 or email him at ian.lycett@birdwatch.co.uk. The booking deadline for the next issue is Thursday 31st December.

DEVON

Pelagic Boat Trips out of Brixham, Devon.

3 hour offshore Birding trips into Lyme Bay.

Species include Manx and Balearic Shearwater, Pomarine, Great and Arctic Skuas and Terns. Also possible are Common, Bottlenose, White-beaked Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise.



Cost is £28 and the dates are from July - Sept. Departing from Brixham at 6pm, later dates/times will vary subject to daylight hours. All trips are subject to weather conditions if running.

www.optimistcharters.co.uk 01803 856428 for further details.

SCOTLAND

Mull Charters

Sea-eagle boat trips and wildlife cruises.

See and photograph eagles up close.

01680 300 444 or 07788 677 131 info@mullcharters.com www.mullcharters.com

MADEIRA ISLAND

MADEIRA WIND BIRDS -

Birdwatching & Nature tours www.madeirawindbirds.com & www.madeirabirds.com Phone: +351-917777441

CANARY ISLANDS

BIRD GUIDE SERVICE AND RESEARCH PROJECT FUERTEVENTURA

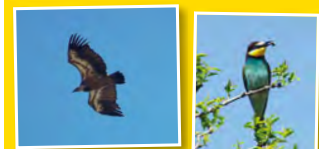


Bird Watch

www.fuerteventurabirdwatch.co.uk Tel: 00 34 66 44 94044

SPAIN

BIRDING IN ANDALUCIA



Fantastic birding, wildlife, peace and beauty, in hidden Spain. Our Andalucian farmhouse provides the ideal setting for the bird-watching holiday you deserve.

To see our latest offers and book your next holiday, visit our web-site at:

www.birdhols.com

or email george@birdhols.com Telephone: +441253 467107 Mobile: +44 7856819291

ACCOMMODATION

SRI LANKA

Jetwing ECO HOLIDAYS

Sri Lanka's experts in Birding Holidays

eco@jetwing.lk www.jetwingeco.com

PERU

Green Tours Operador de Turismo

High quality birding holidays in Peru

More than 1800 species in one single country... welcome to Peru, the birding country!

10% of our profits will support conservation initiatives in north Peru

www.greentours.com.pe

birding@greentours.com.pe

AUSTRALIA

Top End Bird Finder Northern Territory Australia



Guided Tours

mick@nttours.com • +61 419 656 888

SPAIN

SPANISH BREAK CETACEANS AND BIRDS

Join us on a 5-day Minicruise to Spain and check out the dolphins, whales and birds en route. In Spain we'll be trekking in the Picos de Europa and also the marshlands of Cantabria with a local expert. Enjoy a nice beachside hotel at the end of the day! Departures in June, July, September and October from £385



OR CALL 01752 846880

FULL DETAILS ARE ON OUR WEBSITE: WWW.WESSEXCONTINENTAL.CO.UK

TRAVEL

Wild Herzegovina GUIDED BIRDWATCHING TOURS WWW.WILD-HERZEGOVINA.COM

TRAVEL



The only place on earth where you will find Homes made for Birders.

Bed & Birding is a new concept in bird tour management, promotion and accommodation. It is a network of partners that offer an exclusive range of services and facilities.

www.bedandbirding.com

Honeyguide WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS



Chris Durdin, Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays 36 Thunder Lane, Norwich, NR7 0PX Tel: 01603 300552 Email: chris@honeyguide.co.uk

www.honeyguide.co.uk

BIRDERS' MARKETPLACE

TRAVEL

Bird Service

Belarus - 10 days, **£890**
Poland - 7 days, **£590**

Why pay more?



www.birding.pl

NEWS

Rare Bird Alert

Read the News FIRST

FREE 7-day web trial & special pager offers
www.rarebirdalert.com
(tel: 01603 457016)

ADVERTISING

TO ADVERTISE HERE in the next issue of *Birdwatch* please call Ian Lycett on 020 8881 0550 or email him at ian.lycett@birdwatch.co.uk. Booking deadline for the next issue is Thursday 31st December.

FOR SALE

RARITY PHOTOS FOR SALE

Rare and scarce birds from the year and stretching back through decades of raremongering. Just £2.50 each, including p&p.

www.birdsonfilm.com

REPAIRS

REPAIRS & SERVICING OF BINOCULARS & TELESCOPES

Optrep Optical Repairs - Since 1960
www.opticalrepairs.com

Tel: 01243 601365 E-mail: info@opticalrepairs.com
Optrep (ref: BW2), 16 Wheatfield Road, Selsey, West Sussex PO20 0NY
(5 minutes from Pagham HLN)

RETAILER



www.ukwildlifecameras.co.uk

Perfect Christmas present

Enjoy your very own wildlife studio...

Bird Box Camera Systems & Kits starting from **£42.99**



info@ukwildlifecameras.co.uk
020 3727 5239

TO ADVERTISE HERE IN THE NEXT ISSUE PLEASE CALL IAN LYCETT ON 020 8881 0550 BOOKING DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS 31ST DECEMBER.

PUBLISHING

UPDATED original BIRD WATCHER'S LOGBOOK

A concise way to record your observations. Monthly, annual & life columns for 968 species. Garden birds, migrants, index & diary pages. Send £9.50 to Coxton Publications Ltd, September House, 3 Home Farm, Saunders Lane, Walkington, Beverley HU17 8TX - Tel: 01482 881833

In the next issue January



CIRL BUNTING BY OLIVER SMART (WWW.SMARTIMAGES.CO.UK)

■ **Bring out the buntings** – We start the New Year with an ID refresher course on British buntings: the widespread but declining Yellowhammer and the highly localised Cirl Bunting, together with Pine Bunting, a rare vagrant which should be on the radar when scanning bunting flocks this winter.

■ **New directions** – If you're a relative newcomer to birding, or an old hand looking to develop or diversify your interests, what next? From ID, photography, listing and other forms of natural history to conservation volunteering, surveys, 'green' activism and full-time birding, there are many options, as Peter Alfrey reveals.

■ **It was 20 years ago ...** The BTO's Clare Simm charts the 20-year history of one of the world's biggest 'citizen science' projects, the BTO Garden BirdWatch, looking at how the data gathered has added to our understanding of Britain's bird populations and what we might expect in the years to come.

■ **Champions of conservation** – Now entering its third year, the Champions of the Flyway event in Israel is firmly established as an important regional initiative, raising many tens of thousands of pounds to support bird conservation projects. Jonathan Meyrav reveals the deserving cause that will benefit in 2016.

PLUS Birders' Choice Awards: the winners, more top winter itineraries, all the latest rarity highlights and big stories, bird news round-ups from BirdGuides.com, columnists Mark Avery and Lucy McRobert, Steve Young's photo challenge, news and reviews, and your birding questions answered by our panel of experts.

Pre-order your copy online now at www.birdwatch.co.uk
OR see page 73 for details on how to subscribe – get this issue delivered direct to your door and save money!

FREE World of Birds 2016 supplement!

Make 2016 a year with a difference with our guide to seeing the world's top 10 most wanted birds, plus profiles of Estonia, Spain and Texas, and a detailed preview of our own exciting new programme of reader tours

January issue on sale 24 December 2015

TO ADVERTISE

within these pages in the next issue please call Ian Lycett on 020 8881 0550





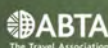
Naturetrek

Birding & Wildlife Holidays Worldwide

AFRICA | ASIA | AUSTRALASIA | EUROPE | THE AMERICAS

Naturetrek is the UK's leading wildlife holiday specialist offering:

- The widest choice of expert-escorted birding & wildlife tours worldwide
- Tailormade wildlife & cultural holidays crafted by experts
- Wildlife cruises on exclusive Naturetrek charters
- Birdwatching, botany, mammals & more
- Unrivalled expertise built over 30 years
- Best wildlife holidays available
- All at unbeatable prices



Follow us on
Facebook



01962 733051 www.naturetrek.co.uk

Naturetrek, Mingledown Barn, Wolf's Lane, Chawton, Hants GU34 3HJ

your letters & photos

Tell us what you think. Write to Dominic Mitchell, Managing Editor, at:
Birdwatch, The Chocolate Factory, 5 Clarendon Road, London N22 6XJ
 or email letters@birdwatch.co.uk
 or www.facebook.com/birdwatchmagazine @BirdwatchExtra

Kids help harriers

I am the lucky mum of Jack and Lucy (below), aged 10 and 6 respectively. Both children are very much aware of the plight of the Hen Harrier. Last year Lucy's 'eggbola' (a raffle to win an Easter egg) theme was Hen Harrier persecution, and Jack stood for his school council in Sunderland to bring Hen Harrier Day (HHD) to the attention of their school.

Their headteacher is allowing them to bring HHD to the school again via the Action Team, and

we will host a raptor display to highlight our 'missing' Hen Harriers; invite our local MP, Julie Elliott, to take part; and invite *Look North* or have it filmed independently. Wildlife TV producer Ruth Peacey has agreed to attend, and offered to give a talk; she is a brilliant role model for my daughter.

I think it's about time HHD reached schools. If children can be part of such positive change when young, they are more likely to grow up wanting to do the same when they are older.

Sam Farrell, via email



Choosy wheatears

ABOVE is a photo I recently took of a Northern Wheatear.

About a year ago, I placed a stick in a mound where the species regularly congregates during migration. Quite a photogenic stick it is, too. Since it has been in place, all the passage wheatears have yet to show any interest in it, despite liking the mound so much. I've put in hours staring at the stick. Batteries have been drained while my camera has been focused on the stick. Birds will land on my vehicle rather than the stick. Nothing. For a year.

But finally, on one recent day, this particular bird landed on the weeds near the stick. The resulting image didn't turn out too bad.

If a wheatear ever lands on the stick itself, I'll be letting everyone know.

Mike Arreff, via email

Join the debate online

twitter

facebook

• **News that the government's Farmland Bird Indicator has revealed a two per cent increase in farmland birds drew comment:**

Arthur Costello: "The reason for the decline of birds such as [Northern] Lapwing is the loss of farmland for building thousands of houses."

Steve Carter: "If the UK population increases as suggested there will be less habitat."

• **On Roger Moore's comments that 'sport' hunting is a "sickness":**

Anne Devine Thornhill: "Sage words, 007."

Claire Dandie: "Absolutely! The same can be said of forcing [animals] to participate in contests for our amusement."

• **Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/birdwatchmagazine and Twitter at www.twitter.com/BirdwatchExtra**

STEVE YOUNG'S PHOTO CHALLENGE

The winner

STEVE'S challenge for October was to photograph great images of autumnal birds.

Steve said: "There were some excellent entries for the autumn challenge, with many top-quality images from a number of photographers – any one of three or four could have taken first place."

"But I can only pick one, and this month's winning photo is of a Coal Tit in autumn leaves by Tim Mason. I felt that this image instantly says 'autumn' no matter what your level of birding experience is – the lovely colours of the leaves are very striking and the perky pose of the Coal Tit composed to one side of the frame is perfect."

"Congratulations to Tim on his winning image – he will receive this month's prize of a copy of *Looking For the Goshawk* by Conor Mark Jameson."

• Turn to page 60 for this month's photo challenge.





BILL ODDIE



All in the mind

It's often claimed that interacting with nature is good for improving one's mood, but *Bill Oddie* finds that this might not always be the case.

It is often mooted – and some would say proven – that depression, stress and anxiety are alleviated by being out in the open air and in touch with nature and wildlife.

I once spent a weekend filming at an alternative therapy retreat, where the instructor – or was he a guru? – assured me that my inability to assume yoga postures without worrying about breaking wind or to chant without giggling, or even become ‘mindful’ of a handful of raisins, didn’t matter because I was a birder. “Birdwatching,” he told me, “is your equivalent of meditation and must have a great calming effect.” “Really?” I responded. “I’ve never thought of it that way.”

I should at this point claim that since I have personal experience of mental health issues, I am allowed to be facetious about what is obviously a serious subject. Serious, yes, but also sometimes silly and certainly rarely clear cut. For example, whenever I am asked if I find birding therapeutic, I have several answers. The first is that it is a sure sign that my mood is plummeting if I lose interest in birds entirely. I don’t want to even go outside. Fortunately, this is balanced by happier times which raise the spirits hugely.

The fact is that when it comes to depression, stress and anxiety, birding can be a symptom or a cure. It may even be a cause! I am in no way questioning birding as therapy, but – let’s face it – if we are talking of stress and anxiety, look no further than the emotional rollercoaster that is twitching.

I have always denied – and still do – that I am a twitcher, but I know what it feels like. Wandering alone around an almost birdless Tresco, Scilly, this September, I had plenty of time for self-examination. I concluded that though I have never been a ‘tick collector’, and I certainly wasn’t competitive, I could be jealous.

Teenage kicks

When I was a teenager – long before pagers and mobiles – we didn’t hear of rarities until they had long departed and were published in a monthly or even annual report. Nevertheless, simply seeing the species name



ALAN TATE

Wildlife is said to improve mental health, but dipping a bird like the December 1999 Ivory Gull in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, could cause anxiety, stress and depression.

“It is a sure sign that my mood is plummeting if I lose interest in birds entirely”

– and maybe a black-and-white photo – sent a painful pang straight to my stomach.

If I could experience such angst about birds that were damn near fictitious, imagine the torment of being able to travel all over Britain in pursuit of recent reports or rumours. I did go on a few famous twitches – the Pagham Greater Sand Plover, the Aldeburgh Ivory Gull, the Black-winged Pratincole muckspreader experience – but the honest truth is that, while the successes were relief rather than joy, the dips were unbearably excruciatingly painful. Anxiety, stress and depression, all caused by jealousy and envy.

I must confess to one more dangerous trait: possessiveness. Who among us would deny that – no matter how generous and magnanimous they are – they are not immune to the infuriating agony of being gripped off on their local patch. Hampstead Heath, London, is my patch. No disrespect to the handful of birders who also watch it, but I don’t really like sharing. If someone says “Bill, you should’ve been here on Thursday. Richard’s Pipit over the hill.” I am not happy for them, I am pissed off!

So there we have it. Highs and lows. Ups and downs. Maybe twitching could be a perfect metaphor for bipolar. ■

YOU CAN FIND OUR PRODUCTS
AT EXCLUSIVE SPECIALIST RETAILERS
AND ONLINE AT WWW.SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
SWAROVSKI OPTIK
SUPPLIER OF BINOCULARS

THE NEW EL LIMITLESS *PERFECTION*



The new EL Family from SWAROVSKI OPTIK is the best ever. Its FieldPro package takes comfort and functionality to a new level. Its perfect optical performance and precision, outstanding ergonomics, and revamped design add the finishing touches to this long-range optical masterpiece. Enjoy moments even more – with SWAROVSKI OPTIK.

SEE THE UNSEEN
WWW.SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK

YOUR MISSION. OUR VISION.

MULTI AWARD WINNING OPTICS.



ENDURANCE ED 20-60x85
ED | DC | FMC | BAK-4 | Waterproof
£629.99



NATURE-TREK 8x42
FMC | BAK-4 | Waterproof
£129.99



SAPPHIRE ED 8x42
ED | DC | FMC | BAK-4 | PC | Waterproof
£379.99